

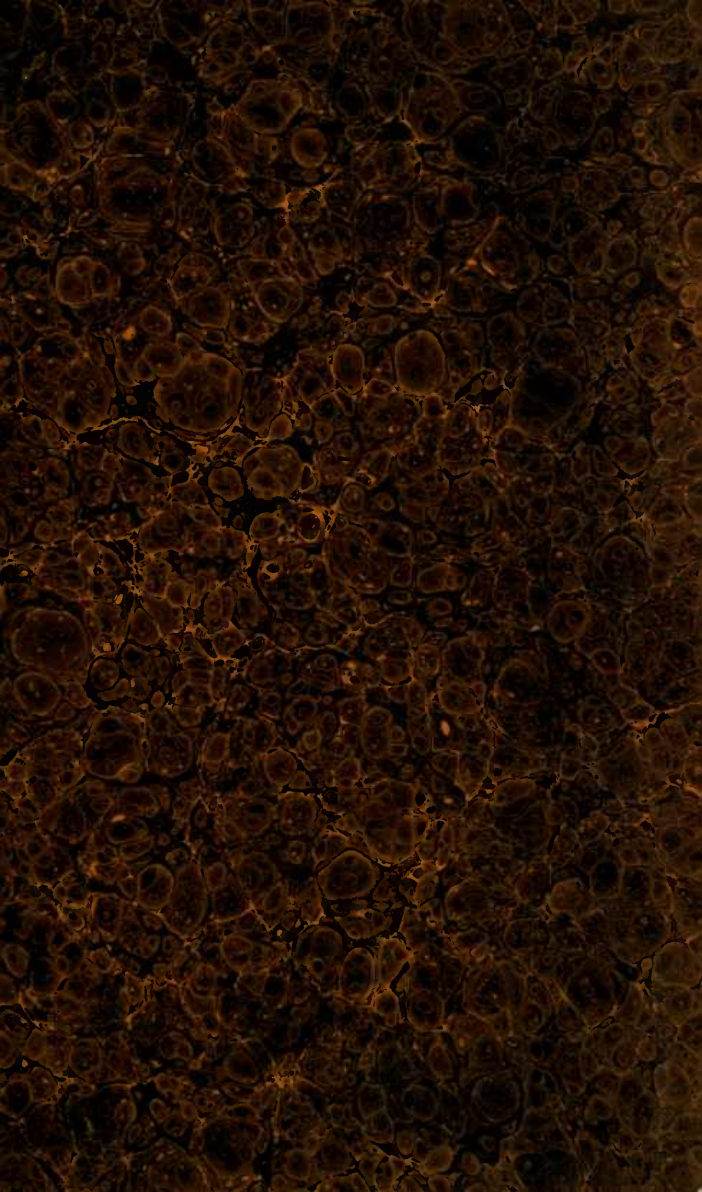
A
000106231
4



UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



Ex Libris
C. K. OGDEN





Alfred G. Prichard

POSTHUMOUS WORKS

OF THE

REV. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

THE REV. J. S. WARDLAW, A.M.

VOL. VII.

A. FULLARTON & CO.:
44 SOUTH BRIDGE, EDINBURGH;
AND 115 NEWGATE STREET, LONDON.

MDCCCLXII.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

1897

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

1897

ASTOR LENOX AND TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
1897

1897

L E C T U R E S

ON THE

PROPHECIES OF ZECHARIAH,

BY THE

REV. RALPH WARDLAW, D.D.

EDITED BY HIS SON,

THE REV. J. S. WARDLAW, A.M.

A. FULLARTON & CO.:
44, SOUTH BRIDGE, EDINBURGH;
AND 115 NEWGATE STREET, LONDON.

MDCCCLXII.

EDINBURGH:
FULLARTON AND MACNAB, PRINTERS, LEITH WALK.

P R E F A C E.

IT is the ambition of some to be specially distinguished as "STUDENTS OF PROPHECY." To such a distinction my revered father made no claim. But as a STUDENT OF GOD'S WORD the prophetic page was not neglected by him. He found there a field of pleasant and profitable research; and sought to throw light upon it, and unfold its treasures for the benefit of others.

Of this he has left abundant evidence, not only in these Lectures on ZECHARIAH, but in numerous other lectures, on most if not all the prophetic books of the Old Testament; and in a complete series of expository discourses on the APOCALYPSE. And of his mode of handling prophetic questions, he presented to the Public a specimen or two during his life-time;—one, a Discourse on "THE PURPOSES OF DIVINE MERCY TO THE SEED OF ABRAHAM;" the other, a Discourse on "THE MILLENNIUM."

These Lectures have been selected, because among the Author's latest productions—having been composed and delivered when he was in his seventy-second year; because the portion of Scripture which they seek to elucidate, while possessing many points of great interest, is apt to be overlooked; and because it introduces greater variety into the character of these posthumous volumes, and shows the Author's facility in giving to every theme a *practical* bearing.

In the interpretation of Prophecy there is a twofold danger—the extreme of *literalism* on the one hand, and of *spiritualism* on the other. This the Author deeply felt; and he made it his aim, to discover the “happy medium” where he had a full persuasion the truth lay. How far he has, in this, been successful the reader must judge. It need be no matter of surprise if at times there is room for hesitation or dissent.

It will be seen that the return of the Jews to their own land, and their possession, hereafter, of a distinct political existence, is regarded as the teaching of this and other parts of the Sacred Record. This was the Author’s opinion from an early period; and it gained strength in later years. The question is somewhat fully discussed in this volume; and the general results of the discussion are in singular harmony with those at which Dr. David Brown arrives in his recent work entitled “*The Restoration of the Jews.*”

While availing himself of the valuable work of Dr. Henderson on the Minor Prophets, the Author ventures to differ from his friend on some points of criticism; and frequently diverges widely from him in his view of the Prophet’s meaning.

This Volume, like those which have preceded it, is commended to the BLESSING OF GOD.

J. S. WARDLAW.

CANONBURY,
LONDON, Jan. 25, 1862.

LECTURE I.

ZECH. I. 1—6.

“In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever? But my words, and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.”

NEAR the close of the Book of Revelation, and therefore of the whole Book of God, we have the statement—“*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*” The meaning seems to be, that the scheme of redemption, contained in that testimony, is the *great theme* of prophecy; that to which, whether more or less directly, the whole relates;—its living soul;—its essential pervading element; bereft of which, it would lose at once all its zest,—all its interest, all its real value, leaving nothing behind but what was vapid and worthless. That such should be the case, was what might reasonably have been anticipated. The fall of man changed entirely the character, and position, and prospects, of the race,—and the whole aspect of futurity. The race became apostate, depraved, outcast, accursed. Then came the first intimation of the plan of mercy; which had been previously

in the form of a matured purpose, in the mind of the God-head. The first promise was the first prophecy. It came from the lips of Jehovah Himself,—in terms intentionally obscure, but of which the full import was to be gradually unfolded—"I will put enmity between thee (the serpent, the Devil, and Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed:—it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This first prophecy was the germ of the whole scheme. Here was "*the testimony of Jesus*," in its original embryo. From that hour, the grand problem of the divine administration towards our world was,—the working out of this divine plan of salvation; the restoration of an apostate race, guilty and depraved, to the favour and to the moral image of God,—in a way not merely consistent with the claims of law and government, and with the honour of all the attributes of the divine character, but that should place them all in a brightness of manifestative glory, such as should fill the intelligent creation with adoring wonder. This, I repeat, was the problem to be worked out. It became, therefore, the leading star of the whole of the divine government of our world;—the spirit of *providence*, as well as of prophecy. Supposing the plan to exist, it could not be otherwise, than that everything else should be subordinated to it; all the plans and measures of God's providential administration so regulated as to be subservient to its successful and final completion. Thus it was before "the fulness of the time;" thus it has been since; thus it shall be to the end. We may speculate, and speculate truly, respecting the designs of providence, in particular courses of events, towards this or that nation, or this or that section of the inhabited earth, in regard to their temporal prosperity or declension, weal or woe; but we must not forget that in the whole of this extensive and complicated administration, there have been from the first, and there are now, higher ends, towards which all events are made to converge, and in the attainment of which they all shall issue. Before "the fulness of time," the whole was a preparation for the Saviour's *first* coming; and now all is bearing forward toward the promised

universality of His holy and happy reign, as the prelude to His *second* coming, and the winding-up of the plans of His mediatorial grace.

Along with the preparatory course of providence, there were, from the beginning, two classes of means especially, by which the nature of the divine scheme of mercy was intimated, still indeed with comparative obscurity, yet with a gradually growing clearness;—I mean the *typical* and the *prophetical*. It is with the latter alone we have at present to do. It began early. Jude tells us, what we should not otherwise have known, that “Enoch, the seventh” in descent “from Adam,” prophesied of the coming of the Lord to judgment:—and it is impossible to doubt that he who prophesied of His coming to *judge* the world, prophesied also of His coming to *save* the world; that he who predicted His second coming predicted also His first. Nor is there any sufficient reason to think that *Enoch* was the only prophet of the antediluvian age. In what may be called the second opening of the world’s history, the very first man—*Noah* himself—is a partaker of the “spirit of prophecy.” And that Spirit, in all the prophets—from *Enoch* to *Malachi*—is called “the Spirit of Christ,” both as being bestowed by Him, and as testifying of Him; and also, perhaps it might be added, as, during His incarnation, given without measure unto Him. But, in spite of both type and prophecy, aided too by the manifestations of God in all creation, ignorance and corruption spread and prevailed. Men showed the truth of the charge, that they “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.” To prevent the total loss of that knowledge, including of course the knowledge of Him in the character and relation in which He had set himself forth in the first promise,—as “the God of salvation,” Abraham was called, and, in due time, amongst his seed, the nation of Israel, the Theocracy, or Mosaic Economy, was instituted. Under this economy, the schemes of type and prophecy, which before had been partial and desultory, were extended, embodied, and more thoroughly *systematized*. And although, among the many prophets that arose in the successive periods of their history, there was

a great variety of predictions, besides those which related *directly* to the coming, and work, and kingdom of the promised Messiah,—yet even those which related simply to the destinies of various nations bore *indirectly* a relation to the same great events. Like the entire scheme of *miracle*, they were designed to establish the truth of God's word; and the accomplishment of the nearer to confirm faith in the more remote. So it is still.

But the prophets in Israel were not mere *seers*—mere *foretellers*. They were inspired instructors. They were commissioned by God to convey His mind to the people; to tell them God's truth; to enjoin upon them God's will; to convey to them God's promises and God's threatenings,—His assurances of blessing to faith and obedience, and His equally faithful assurances of retributive vengeance to unbelief and rebellion:—by these means, to keep them in the worship and the ways of Jehovah, and direct the eye of their hopes to the coming of the promised Deliverer, and to his “great salvation.” That these prophets were, in the proper sense of the term, *inspired men*,—that they received their messages to the people directly from God,—whether they were messages of instruction, warning, or prediction, we have the most unequivocal assurance of the New Testament Scriptures. What *can* be more explicit than the words of Peter:—“The prophecy came not, of old time, by the will of man; but holy men of God *spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*?”—or those of Paul, “God, in sundry portions and in various ways,* *spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*?” Those modern neologians, or anti-supernaturalists, who would have us to regard the prophets merely as great thinkers, men of lofty genius, of penetrating intuition, of calculating sagacity,—shrewd guessers at the future from the aspects of the present,—not only utter words which, when applied to the great scheme of Scripture prophecy,—so vast, so complicated, and reaching onward to the close of time,—are words without meaning; but they would be far more

* πολυμειρῶς καὶ πολυτροπῶς.

consistent with themselves, and far less mischievous to others, would they but avow their unbelief, and cast aside the Bible altogether, as “old wives’ fables,”—prophets and apostles alike.—The chief period of Old Testament prophecy is from Moses to Malachi. It embraces ten centuries. And the perfect harmony between these “holy men of God,” speaking and writing independently of each other, at different places in the same time, or at the same place in successive times,—harmony in doctrine, in precept, and in prediction as well as in the spirit of divine faithfulness, and zeal, and devotion, and love, by which all their writings are pervaded, is a fact for which no reasonable account can be given but the admission of their having spoken and written under the same influence, and delivered the dictates of *one* Mind.*—The various *modes* in which the dictates of that one Mind were imparted to them and by them, will naturally be considered, when some of the visions of this prophet—Zechariah—come before us.

The Old Testament prophets, whose writings have come down to us,—writings which form so large and important a part of the canon of ancient Scripture,—have been divided into two classes—the *greater* prophets, and the *lesser* or *minor* prophets. The *former* are four in number—ISAIAH, JEREMIAH, EZEKIEL, and DANIEL:—the *latter*, *twelve*—HOSEA, JOEL, AMOS, JONAH, OBADIAH, MICAH, NAHUM, HABAKKUK, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, and MALACHI. The distinction is founded, not in any superiority of the former over the latter in the character, or weight, or credit, of their predictions, or the other contents of their respective writings; but solely on the comparative size, or extent, of those writings. They are all alike divine; and some of the shortest will bear comparison in importance with the longest.

Neither in the original Hebrew, nor in the Septuagint Greek, nor in our English Bibles, are the books arranged

* “Whence but from Heaven should men unskilled in arts,
In various ages born, in various parts,
Weave such agreeing truths? or how or why
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?”—ED.

in the *order of time*. Nor, with regard to *all* of them at least, is this chronological order perfectly settled. The chief difference among critics relates to *Joel*. By one critic he is placed *fourth* among the *minor* prophets; by another *sixth*; and by another *first of all*. I shall give the arrangement of the whole, that is probably nearest to the truth; some of the times being settled by the dates prefixed to the books themselves by their writers, and some by their contents, as presenting allusions to *events* of which the times are known:—JONAH; AMOS; HOSEA; ISAIAH; JOEL; MICAH; NAHUM; ZEPHANIAH; JEREMIAH; HABAKKUK; DANIEL; OBADIAH; EZEKIEL; HAGGAI; ZECHARIAH; MALACHI. The period embraced by these prophets, from Jonah to Malachi, extends to about four hundred and thirty years, reaching from 850 before Christ to 420. By much the larger number, of course, preceded the Babylonish captivity. Daniel's prophetic career was in Babylon, and during the whole time of that captivity; Ezekiel's during part of it; and Haggai's, Zechariah's, and Malachi's after the return from it.

There is an obvious importance in fixing and keeping in mind the time and circumstances in which such books were written; or in which their contents, whether prophetic or of other descriptions, were uttered. With regard to the former—the prophetic portions—*one* thing is instantly settled by ascertaining the date,—namely, that nothing, in the form of *prediction*, can relate to events *preceding* that date. And, with regard to their more miscellaneous contents, there may be allusions, modes of speech, and particular directions and commands as to conduct, which the time, and the condition of the people at the time, may contribute materially to explain. The great importance of fixing time, is strikingly illustrated by the case of those Prophets who flourished subsequently to the Babylonish captivity. There are *two* restorations of Israel which are the subjects of prophecy,—the one *at that time*, from Babylon; the other *still future*, from their more general and prolonged dispersion. This, then, makes us sure, that if, in the Prophets that delivered their predictions *after* the first restoration, there are

predictions of a restoration *yet to come*, they *must* have reference, not to the former, but to the latter. Whereas, in the Prophets that preceded the captivity in Babylon, one of the principal difficulties, when a future restoration is spoken of, is to determine with certainty whether the reference is to the one or to the other,—to the one now past, or to the one still in prospect.

Zechariah and *Haggai* were contemporaries. They lived and prophesied together, among the returned captives, at Jerusalem. But *Haggai* is thought to have begun to prophesy a short time—say *two*, or at least within *three* months—before *Zechariah*; while *Zechariah*'s course of official duty continued for a considerably longer period than that of *Haggai*.*

That *Zechariah* was a *young man* when he began his prophetic career, we have his own testimony. He is expressly so called.† We have in the opening of his Book‡ the names of his father and his grandfather—the former *Berechiah*, the latter *Iddo*. When, therefore, he is called “the *son* of *Iddo*,”§ it is according to a common idiom among the Hebrews, which, in special cases, and for special reasons, (such as, perhaps, the greater distinction and notoriety of the grandfather than the father) admits of the title *son* signifying son by one remove, or *grandson*. It is, indeed, so general, as sometimes to signify simply a *lineal descendant*.—In the list given in the twelfth chapter of *Nehemiah* of those Jews who returned from Babylon with *Zerubbabel* and *Joshua*, we have|| the name of *Iddo*. Now, that list is one of “*priests and Levites*.”¶ If, therefore, *this* *Iddo* be the same (as is generally understood) with the grandfather of *Zechariah*, then *Zechariah* himself was of priestly lineage, descended of the tribe of *Levi*.

A question has been started, which it would be wrong to pass without notice—whether the prophet *Zechariah* be the same with the “*Zacharias, son of Barachias*,” whom our Lord mentions when he says, “That upon you may come

* Comp. Hag. i. 1 and Zech. i. 1,—1st of 6th month—24th of 8th.

† Chap. ii. 4.

‡ Chap. i. 1.

§ Ezra v. 1.

|| Verse 4.

¶ Verse 1.

all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.”* There is a *Zacharias* mentioned in the second Book of Chronicles† as having been slain by the fury of the exasperated populace, or rather at the instigation of king Joash and his princes, for his faithfulness in denouncing their idolatries. But then he was the son, not of *Barachias*, but of “*Jehoiada* the priest,” who is so specially, honourably, and repeatedly mentioned under that name, without the least hint of another belonging to him, that, although it was common for the Hebrews to have two names, it seems unlikely that he should have been mentioned by our Lord under a different one from that under which he has so honourable a testimony in the history.‡ On the other hand, Zechariah the prophet answers to our Lord’s description, so far as the name and the father’s name are concerned:—he is “Zacharias, the son of Barachias;” but we have no record of his having suffered a violent death. It may be observed, however, that a mere *negation* is not enough to disprove the fact of his having so suffered; and especially a negation in such circumstances. For, let it be remembered, that its *not* having been recorded may arise from the simple fact of there being no inspired history subsequent to the time in which it could have been recorded; that circumstances are, in other places, alluded to which took place subsequently to the date of the last inspired historical record, and which, though not recorded, were well known in the traditionary and apocryphal history of the Jewish people;—such as some of the cases referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, of “women who received their dead raised to life again,” and of martyrs who were “sawn asunder;” and that, although the spirit of the Jewish people at the very time of the return from Babylon, or even when Zechariah began his prophetic career, may hardly appear such as to war-

* Matt. xxiii. 35.

† Chap. xxiv. 21.

‡ It is by the supposition of *two* names that commentators explain the difficulty which arises from considering the son of Jehoiada as the person referred to:—which is the *general* opinion.—Ed.

rant the supposition of their shedding the blood of one of the Lord's prophets, yet that Zechariah was, when he began his career, but a youth; that he might live long, and prophesy long, and that by a people so proudly capricious and from first to last so prone to selfish murmurings and rebellions, he might, ere the close of his course, have delivered such expostulations, and reproofs, and predictions of divine vengeance, as might stir them up to blood-thirsting and blood-shedding violence. There is one consideration which has been regarded, and not, I think, without a good deal of force, as favouring this supposition. I give it in the words of Scott:—"Especially let it be considered, how far it might have been previously expected, that the murder of one who suffered before the persecuting reigns of Ahaz, Manasseh, and Jehoiakim (during which more innocent blood was shed and more prophets were slaughtered than in all preceding ages) should be mentioned as the last of the righteous persons whose blood would be required of the generation which crucified the Messiah? The blood shed *after* the death of Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, especially filled up the measure of national wickedness, and brought on Judah the Babylonish captivity:—yet, on this supposition, it is wholly passed over by our Lord. But if Zechariah the prophet were meant, and if he were murdered after the captivity, as the other Zechariah had been before; the whole appears natural; and probably he might be the last eminent person who thus suffered." This is strong; and I think it is further strengthened by remarking, that in taking the sweep of time during which the blood had been shed for which an avenging God was to "make inquisition," our Lord must be supposed, from the very energy of his style of denunciation, to have given it *all* its extent; that in *going back* he goes to the furthest possible point—"the blood of righteous Abel;" and that in *coming down* he *must* be conceived also to have come down to the *nearest* case on record,—which the one in Chronicles certainly could not be. The mere silence of Josephus as to the fact is very far from being decisive against it; seeing it is by no means the only case in which Josephus

has slurred over what was not to the credit of his countrymen.—Nor is it very likely, though possible, that there was still a later Zechariah, with a father too whose name was Barachias, who had come to a violent death at the hands of the unbelieving Jews. Though not, therefore, a matter of certainty, it seems not without some considerable amount of probability, that our prophet *was* the martyr to whom Jesus refers.

I shall proceed on the assumption that Zechariah was the writer of the *entire Book*. By certain critics doubts have been expressed as to the authorship of the last six chapters. The doubts with some have rested on the circumstance (of which notice may be taken when we come to the proper place) of a passage towards the close of the book being cited by the Evangelist Matthew as from *Jeremiah*;—and with others on what they have been pleased to regard as a difference of style between the latter portion of the book and the former:—a difference which is often to be found in the critic's imagination, or his fondness for originality and a character for discrimination;—which, so far as it really exists in the present instance, is not more than may be accounted for from the difference of subject, and the lapse of some considerable interval of time between the giving out of the former and the later series of prophecies; and which is as far as possible from being such as to warrant so bold and reckless a conclusion. The improbability of an earlier authorship is not a little strengthened by the fact of the total absence, in that part of the Book as well as in the former, of every allusion to the kingly government, or to any other circumstance distinctive of the period of the history *antecedent to the captivity*,—of every allusion from which a surmise could be elicited of the writer's having lived before it, and especially, I might perhaps add, of all prophetic allusion to the coming captivity itself. I am disposed to adopt, in their full force, the words of a modern, and at once a learned and sober-minded critic, when he says:—"On the whole, I cannot but regard the objections to the authenticity of the disputed chapters as the offspring either of a holy jea-

lousy for the honour of the Evangelist Matthew, who attributes chapters xi., xii., xiii. to Jeremiah and not to Zechariah, or of a spirit of wanton and unbridled hypercriticism, which would unsettle everything, in order to satisfy the claims of certain favourite principles of interpretation that may happen to be in vogue.”* I may just add, that we never were more in need than at the present hour, of *sober-mindedness* as well as learning, in the critical investigation of the sacred Volume.

The Book has been divided into *two* sections by some, and by others into *three*:—but the divisions seem to be of little consequence. As far as they are marked by the Prophet himself, they will come in our way for notice in course of exposition.

The opening address is general. Its style is that of crimination and warning. It reminds them of the displeasure of Jehovah with the perverse doings of their fathers in former days;—and the lesson of admonition is more than implied, that, if they continued to act as their fathers had done, they might look for the same displeasure, and the same manifestations of it.

The second verse, expressing the “*sore displeasure of Jehovah with their fathers*,”—may be interpreted as bearing reference to the whole of their previous history. They had all along shown a mournfully strong and inveterate propensity to depart from God and from his ways. They had needed incessant repetitions of divine admonitions, entreaties, promises, and threatenings; and many a time, all had proved unavailing. Jehovah bound them to himself with “cords of love.” But they “brake the bands asunder, and cast away the cords from them.” They chose their own ways. They followed the wicked devices of their own hearts. They thus provoked Him to anger. They drew down upon themselves

* Henderson on the Minor Prophets, p. 365. In page 362, while presenting a formidable array of names against the authenticity of the said chapters, he gives no inconsiderable number in its favour—Carpzovius, Blayney, Jahn, Beckhaus, Koester, Hengstenberg, and Burger.—Ed.

His judicial visitations. From one of those visitations the people whom the Prophet now addressed had but recently, in the faithfulness and mercy of a covenant-keeping and compassionate God, been delivered. And I cannot doubt that to *that* most recent manifestation of the divine displeasure Zechariah specially referred. Their fathers had by their sins brought that heavy seventy years' judgment upon themselves. And He who in justice had executed the judgment had returned in mercy, and rescued them from their second bondage.

Now, "the *second year of Darius*" (Darius Hystaspes) was sixteen years after the Jews had begun to avail themselves of the decree of Cyrus, giving them liberty to return to their own land, and munificently aiding them in effecting such return. And it appears especially from the style of remonstrance in the Book of Haggai, that there was now, whatever for a short season there might have been, a great slackening of their zeal for the re-establishment of the worship of Jehovah. They had begun to mind *self* more than *God*. His temple was neglected. They said it was time enough to attend to it when they had got themselves thoroughly accommodated,—not comfortably only, but elegantly:—"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?" They "ran every man to his own house"—to build, and finish, and furnish, and adorn *it*; and let the house of God stand in its ruins. For this very thing—which was just an imitation of the spirit and practice of their fathers,—Jehovah had begun to make *them* too feel the tokens of His displeasure:—"Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house."*

* Hag. i. 5, 6, 9.

And what is the injunction—and what the promissory encouragement to compliance?—verse 3. “Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.” The injunction was obeyed, and the promise was fulfilled:—“Consider now, from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord; since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press-fat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord’s temple was laid, consider it.”* It appears that Haggai delivered *his* expostulation in the *sixth* month, and Zechariah *his* in the *eighth* month,—following up that of Haggai. Both, by the blessing of God, had “wrought effectually” in them; so that on “the four and twentieth day of the *ninth* month,” they set about laying the foundation of God’s temple. They thus “returned to God,” and God “returned to them:”—“*from this day* will I bless you.”

Brethren, the entire procedure of Jehovah toward His ancient people was a manifestation of His character. His delight was in giving and fulfilling promises, not in denouncing and executing threatenings; in blessing, not in cursing; in returning, not in forsaking; in saving, not in destroying. It was never He that first left His people; it was His people that left Him. *His* leaving was always judicial, always punitive; never in sovereignty, but always in righteous chastisement; never voluntary, always reluctant and constrained. —“How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my

* Hag. ii. 15—18.

repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim; for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee; and I will not enter into the city.”* The language of Isaiah was always a truth—“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief and bring forth iniquity. Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us; we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in darkness.”† And no sooner did His chastisements produce their effect,—no sooner was there a symptom discoverable of penitence and humiliation, and turning of heart to God,—than God showed that He was not willingly keeping aloof from them, but was ready and delighted to return to them in mercy, and pour down upon them “showers of blessing.”

And thus it is still. I have no idea of any such thing as the *sovereign* hiding of God’s countenance;—which is the same thing with the sovereign shutting of the mental eye—the spiritual vision—of His children. No. It is not now, any more than of old, He that withdraws from His people; it is His people that withdraw from Him. In correction for such withdrawment, He may hide himself, and take away that delightful sense of His favour, which is the “chief joy” of the believing soul. But whenever, with a “broken and contrite heart” for their unbelief and sin, they return with the prayer—“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;” will He *then* keep at a distance,—still “hide his face,”—still “hold back the face of his throne, and spread his cloud upon it?” No. He will verify the words before us—“Return

* Hos. xi. 8, 9.

† Isa. lix. 1—4, 9.

unto me, and I will return unto you." He "retaineth not his anger for ever: he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again; he will have compassion on his people; he will subdue their iniquities; he will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." He will unveil His face, and light it up with love. He will dispel the cloud from His throne, and "show them his glory,"—"manifesting himself to them, as he doeth not unto the world." He will make them to feel anew that He is theirs, and that they are His, and make their "joy" again "full" in "fellowship with HIMSELF." O! if God's people will be but true to Him, they will find Him unfailingly true to them. He will verify to them that most gracious and comprehensive of all assurances—"I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee." The end of all His corrective visitations is to bring His children back when they have wandered; or to draw the bond of their attachment to Him more close, when aught has slackened it. And to all His children, when they are losing ground in their course heavenward, or are drawn aside from that course by the attractions of a fascinating world,—His encouraging invitation is still the same—"Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." And if they will only come with the heart, saying, "Lo, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God"—He will not disappoint them. He "receives them graciously, and loves them freely."

What Zechariah says in verse 4. "Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord"—is just what all the prophets before him had said. Hear the words of Jeremiah:—"From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the Lord hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the Lord hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined

your ear to hear. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the Lord; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt:"*—and observe how far back the same statement is carried—"From the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers."† And they were now betraying the same tendencies with their fathers:—and the reference to them is an indirect but abundantly intelligible warning.

And what is the precise connexion of verse *fifth*, "Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?"—There is no mistaking the *meaning*. Both are gone;—their "dust to the earth as it was, their spirits to God who gave them." They have finished their course, and "the place that knew them knoweth them no more."—But what is the spirit and aim of the questions *here*? I answer,

1. Take the language in connexion with the following verse—"But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." It is as if he had said—"Your fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live for ever?" They are gone. They are not now here, that we may make our appeal to them. But are we, then, without their testimony? Is it not on record? Did not my words lay hold of your fathers? Did not they

* Jer. xxv. 3—7.

† Jer. vii. 25, 26.

experience their truth?—the truth, both of my threatenings when they rebelled, and of my promises when they returned? When they *did* return, was it not with the confession—“Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so *hath* he dealt with us?”—Take, then, the testimony of your departed fathers. Let them, “though dead, yet speak.” And from their twofold recorded experience of my faithfulness, be persuaded at once to take warning and to receive encouragement.

2. “Your fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live for ever?”—They are gone. Their lives have proved “as a vapour, that endured for a little, and vanished away.” The prophets were the servants of God. They had their period of service, which it was incumbent upon them to fill up diligently and faithfully for Him from whom they had their commission,—as men who knew that they were not to “live for ever.” That period is closed. They can speak no more. *We* have come, as if the prophet had said, in their room. Nor are *we*, any more than they, to “live for ever.” “Our days,” like theirs, “are determined; the number of our months is with God.” This is *our* time of service. It becomes *us* too to fill it up faithfully; to plead with you, in God’s name, as those who know not whether they shall ever have another message to deliver, or another hour to deliver it; to speak as dying men to dying men.—And “your fathers,”—while they lived, they had the ministry of the prophets, “speaking to them the word of the Lord.” They had thus their period of privilege and probation;—their day of grace;—their time of opportunity for shunning the displeasure, and obtaining the favour, of the God with whom they had to do. That period—that day—that time—is now closed. And “*where* are they?” No longer *here*; and what their state is in the world unseen depends on the use they made of God’s lessons by his prophets while on earth,—of the warnings of God’s vengeance,—of the offers and invitations of God’s mercy. It is a significant memento that such was *their own* case;—that the present was *their* day of

grace:—that soon it would come to be said of *them* “where are they?”—that they should therefore “know” and improve “the time of their visitation;”—that they should not “be as their fathers” when they persisted in rebellion, and refused to hearken; but rather as their fathers, when they humbled themselves, and returned, as believing penitents, to God.—I may just add

3. “Your fathers, where are they? the prophets, do they live for ever?”—The prophet was seeking to stir them up to activity,—to the diligent and zealous service of God. He reminds them by the questions that *life* is the time for *action*; that to them, as well as to those who had gone before them, that time must soon come to an end. It is like saying, therefore—“Work;” and especially “work the work of God, while it is day;” remembering that “the night cometh, when no man can work:” “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.”

I need not, surely, say, that, in the full spirit of them, all these are lessons for the people of God *now*, as much as they were *then*. And if the sin of departure from the living God was aggravated in its guilt in the case of those who both had had, in the experience of their fathers, such warnings before them, and in their own deliverance from captivity such obligations laid upon them by the divine goodness, how much heavier the guilt of apostasy *now*, when we have the instruction of *Apostles* as well as *Prophets*; when God has even “spoken unto us by his Son;” when “the great redemption is complete,” and “the accepted time and the day of salvation” is come; when we have so much larger an amount of privilege than *could* be enjoyed at any period of the old economy; and when we live under a dispensation which is, by way of eminence, “the ministration of the Spirit?”—If “he that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of

God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* Listen then, Christian professors, to the monitory voice—"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."†

And, while we thus shrink with self-diffident dread, from the thought of apostasy from Christ and from God, let us see to it, that, in our different conditions and relations in life—in the family, in the church, in general society, we be found filling up our fleeting day of life with an increasingly active devotedness, "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," that so, when it shall, in our turn, come to be said of us—"Where are they?" the recollection of our lives by those who survive us, may not be an entire blank. Try, every one of you, my fellow-christians, to give others, as far as lieth in you, reason to remember you, as instruments of good; and, above all, of the highest good,—their soul's good—their eternal good.

And, while there are special warnings against apostasy to the professing people of God, because such apostasy has in it special guilt, and exposes to a specially "fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation,"—we must, at the same time, as those who are not to "live for ever," and who know not but that, ere to-morrow it may be said of them, "*Where are they?*"—and who know that this is the position of their hearers as well as their own,—lift our warning and our inviting voice, in the name of a warning and inviting God, to such as have yet made no transition, even by profession, to the side of Christ and of God,—who are still "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, because without

* Heb. x. 28, 29.

† Heb. x. 35—38.

Christ, and without God." Let me beseech you, friends and fellow-sinners, to *think*. O how many souls have been lost for want of thought!—going on through life without thought,—and then, either losing the power to think, or awakened to the exercise of it when it is too late. Just try to fancy your last moment come,—your soul disembodied,—and the first fearful consciousness coming over it, of its being —*lost!*—irretrievably *lost!*—lost in the very midst of the means of safety!—lost amidst the beseechings of a merciful God, in the name of a no less merciful Mediator,—lost, from its own refusal to be saved!—the last opportunity gone,—and gone for ever!—What would that consciously lost soul then give, for a return to earth, and another offer of mercy!—Let me beseech you then, neither to live here as if you *were* to "live for ever"—nor to live here as if, when you died, you were *not* to live for ever. In the name of His beloved Son,—in the exercise of that mercy in which He delights, and in which He has shown his delight by providing so marvellous a way for its consistent and honourable exercise—God—your Maker, Governor, and Judge—the God with whom you have, now and finally, to do—says to you—to all of you—to each one of you—"RETURN UNTO ME; AND I WILL RETURN UNTO YOU." He gives it you upon oath; that you may have the assurance of it "by two immutable things in which it is impossible for Him to lie,"—that "He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live:" and He follows up the assurance with the earnest entreaty—(strange! *God's* entreaty to *you!* is not the proper order *your* entreaty to God?)—but, in the condescension of infinite compassion, it *does* come from *God* to *you*,—let your ear listen, and your heart yield. It will be your life.

LECTURE II.

ZECH. I. 7—21.

“Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah, the son of Barachiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle-trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white. Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be. And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the Lord that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest. Then the angel of the Lord answered and said, O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the Lord answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words. So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord shewed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.”

WE have presented in this passage *two* of a series of *eight visions*, seen by the prophet, and seen, so far as any intimation is given us, in immediate succession, in the course of the same night. The visions are distinct, yet connected. Our plan must be, to illustrate each in succession, and then, by a summing-up of their contents, show their connexion. They occupy what may be considered as the first *section* of the Book,—ending at the middle of the sixth chapter.

The month *Sebat*, or *Shebat*, in which “the word of the Lord came” to the Prophet, was the eleventh month of the Jewish sacred year. It extended “from the new moon in January to the new moon in February” of our division. The *civil* year of the Jews commenced from the equinoctial new moon in Autumn, and their *sacred* or *ecclesiastical* year from the equinoctial new moon in Spring; the former, that is, in our September, and the latter in our March; so that the eleventh month of the latter (by which it is that this prophet calculates time), must have corresponded to part of January and February. And the name of the month is thought to have an etymological reference to the *sprouting*, or *shooting-forth* of the spring season.* This was three months after the former inspired message, which, as the first verse tells us, was in the *eighth* month of the same year. God sends his messages when it pleases him; but they are always wisely and appropriately timed. And among the principles by which their seasons are determined, there are *two* which we may, in passing, notice. The first is, that, when warnings are ineffectual, they are, in faithfulness and compassion, blending with judicial indignation, reiterated and urged:—and the second is, that, when they *have* proved effectual, they are followed up, in loving-kindness and mercy, with an increase of divine instruction and encouragement:—the two principles, indeed, being properly one—that laid down by our Lord himself, when he says—

* שבט “Ex Hebræis Carpentrasei hunc mensem ita dictum putat a surculis et ramulis in eo efflorescentibus. Alii originem in vetere lingua Persicâ acquisiverunt.” *Gesen. Thesaur.*—ED.

“For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that which he hath.”* They who do not rightly improve “the word of the LORD” shall have a famine of it!

Of the “*various manners*” in which we are told God “spake unto the fathers by the prophets,”† *six* have been specified:—*direct internal suggestion; articulate audible voices; the Urim and Thummim; dreams; visions; the appearance of the dead.* It is with one or other of *two only* of these that we have aught at present to do; namely, *dreams* and *visions*. That these were customary modes of divine communication, we learn from the words of Jehovah himself—“Hear now my words; If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.”‡

Direct inward suggestion is very properly distinguished from *dreams* and *visions*. For, although both of these might be considered as coming under the general head of *inward suggestion*,—both being communications *to the mind* independently of the external senses; yet the communications are not, in either, so direct—so immediate. In “*direct inward suggestion*,” there is supposed to be no kind of medium whatever; but that discoveries of truths or of events are made to the mind of the prophet, without the intervention of either dream or vision, or voice, or apparition. It is a matter of uncertainty, whether the discoveries made to Zechariah were made by *dream* or by *vision*. He tells us they were made “*by night*.” But he might be *awake* in the night-season as well as *asleep*; so that what he describes might have been a *vision* as well as a *dream*.

The *mental vision*, properly so called, might be presented to the prophet’s inward view, in open day, when he was broad awake, and even, in some cases, in the midst of company. Of this we have a remarkable example in the beginning of the eighth chapter of Ezekiel: “And it came to pass,

* Matt. xiii. 12.

† Heb. i. 1.

‡ Num. xii. 6.

in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the LORD God fell there upon me." In such cases, whether in company or in solitude, there was what we call a *trance* or *ecstasy*:—a complete abstraction of the mind from all outward objects; an unconsciousness, probably, of their presence; an entire absorption of its powers in what was supernaturally—by a direct divine influence—brought under its contemplation; the senses being, in the meanwhile, locked up,—the eye unaffected by the visible, and the ear by the audible; the whole process passing in the hidden chambers of the inner man. This seems what is expressed by the phrase of Ezekiel, which he repeatedly uses—"the hand of the Lord fell upon me"—laying, as it were, an arrest upon all his powers for His own special purpose,—interdicting for the time all intrusion and all disturbance. This is the phrase Ezekiel seems to use when aught was imparted to him *by vision*. On other occasions, when he received any communication by *immediate suggestion*, his more simple expression is—"The word of the Lord came unto me." What Ezekiel expresses by "the hand of the Lord falling upon him" is the same with what John expresses when he says, "*I was in the Spirit*:"—the meaning being that for the time he was entirely taken, as it were, out of himself—abstracted from all his own ordinary consciousnesses, and brought under the Spirit's irresistible and all-excluding mastery. And such was Peter's vision, when it is said of him, that, while engaged in prayer, he "*fell into a trance*:"—and such were Paul's "visions and revelations of the Lord," when he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body, so vivid were the impressions of what he heard and saw, and, at the same time, so thoroughly was everything pertaining to earth and sense shut out. The prophets in whose writings there is most of *vision* are—Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, and John. The vision was, if I mistake not, invariably, and indeed it might almost be said necessarily, *symbolical*. *Dreams* were sometimes simply and directly monitory. But more frequently they were also sym-

bolical. Thus God's appearance in a dream to Abimelech the king of Gerar, warning him respecting the wife of Abraham, was supernatural, but simply monitory. Joseph's dreams of the corn-sheaves, and of the sun and moon and twelve stars were also from God; but they were symbolical. The dreams of Nebuchadnezzar—both that of the *image*, and that of the *tree*—were symbolical:—and it was wisely ordered, in order to bring honour to the true God in his eyes and in the eyes of his people, that, instead of the prophet having the dreams himself, the monarch should have them, and the prophet be called in as the sole interpreter. The *vision* and the *dream* are very closely analogous. In both there was the same unconsciousness of all that was passing in the external world. In *vision*, the mind was, in this respect, very much *as if* in sleep. A passage or two in the Book of Daniel may serve to show how nearly they were allied, and how almost undistinguishable:—"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea."* Here we have a *dream*—distinctly so called: yet what was presented to the mind in sleep, which he proceeds to describe, had all the characters of a symbolical vision. Compare the passage with the opening of the eighth chapter—"In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai."† This is a *vision*. No mention is made of *night* or of *sleep*, or of *dreaming*: and yet he uses the words "after *that* which appeared unto me *at the first*;"—which, as we have seen, was a *dream*; or, more correctly, a *vision in a dream*. It may be thought by

* Dan. vii, 1, 2.

† Dan. viii. 1, 2.

some that the terms of the eighteenth verse of the same chapter settle the point that *this* was a *vision in a dream too*;—"Now as he was speaking with me, I was *in a deep sleep* on my face toward the ground." The attentive reader, however, must at once perceive that this is not at all meant to express the state in which he was when the vision was brought before his mind, but a part of what seemed to him *in* the vision, an item, or circumstance, in the details of the vision itself; just as the subsequent particular evidently is—"but he touched me, and set me upright"—together indeed with all that follows.

We shall not attempt, then, to determine with *certainly* whether the scenes described by Zechariah were *visions in a trance* or *visions in a dream*. All that we can say is, that from their having been "*by night*," the probability seems in favour of the latter. And with regard to each of the visions, it will at once naturally occur to all of you, that there are two leading questions—the first, *What was seen?*—the second, *What was its meaning?* The latter, indeed, was the natural inquiry of the prophet himself: and in each case, we shall find, with greater and less degrees of simplicity, the answer given. Respecting the two visions which *now* come under our review, I assume in the outset, from their manifest general character, that they bear relation *to the then present condition of the Jewish people*, and have no distant prospective reference.

I. Let us take up these two questions, then, in regard to the *first* vision. 1. *What did the prophet see?* He saw (verse 8.) a man, mounted on a horse, of which the colour was red. This horseman stood in a low-lying valley, in a grove of myrtle-trees. Behind him were other horsemen (for to suppose the rest to have been *horses* only without riders is out of the question) mounted on horses of different colours; one troop *red*, another—our translation says "*speckled*," but, according to the best critics, *light-bay*, or *chestnut*, and a third *white*.

Our first inquiry, then, relates to the *Leader*. What was this "man on the red horse?" In answer, we are sure of

one thing from the passage itself—that, under the appearance of a man, he was *an angel*. Verses tenth and eleventh make this certain :—“And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth. And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.” And I need not say to any who are at all familiar with the Old Testament history, how frequent such appearances of angels were under a temporary human form. But there is a second question—Was he a mere *created* angel? That he was *more*, commentators of all classes appear to be agreed. I am fully satisfied the exposition is right, which makes him the divine “Angel of the Covenant,”—the same who, under a similar human form, appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, and with whom he interceded for the cities of the plain ;—to Jacob, before his meeting with Esau, with whom he had his mysterious but significant wrestling, and to whom he said, “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me,” and from whom he got the new name of Israel, because “as a prince he had power with *God*, and prevailed ;”—to Moses at the burning bush,—when, hearing from the bush the voice that said, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob—he hid his face, and was afraid to look upon God ;”—to Joshua at Jericho, when, with a drawn sword in his hand, he said—“As captain of the LORD’s host am I come ;”—and on various other occasions. That this was a vision of the same glorious divine person, we shall see evidence by and by in the passage before us. The “*red horse*,” on which he appeared mounted, was the symbol of *war*—from which he had returned a conqueror, or for which, if needful, he stood prepared.*

Our next inquiry is—What were the other riders, and their horses? An eminent modern critic says that on a

* Rev. vi. 4.

comparison of different passages of Scriptures it will appear "that horses with their riders are employed in the symbolical language of Scripture to denote *dispensations of divine providence*." * Yet he argues decidedly for understanding the first horse and his rider as a representation of the *divine Angel of the Covenant*. Does not this introduce incongruity into the symbol? If horses and their riders symbolize dispensations of providence, why not the first as well as the others? I at once acquiesce in the more ordinary view of this part of the symbol—that these riders and their horses represent the hosts of heaven—the angelic hosts—as under the leadership of the Divine person, to whom from the beginning the whole conduct of the schemes of redeeming mercy in our world had been committed. They ride, in the vision, on horses—representing the *speed* and the *power* with which they execute their commissions; and these commissions, executed under the control of their divine leader, are various in kind—for weal or for woe—for mercy or for judgment: this variety being here signified by the various colours of the horses; the *red*, vengeful bloodshed; the *white*, triumph, peace, joy; the *bay*, probably in different shades, all that might be intermediate in national condition between the two.

Our last question relates to their *position*—the *place they occupied*. They "stood among the *myrtle-trees* in the *bottom*"—or the *valley*.† The critic before referred to conceives that this is not designed at all to form part of the symbol, but meant merely "to give vivacity and force to the description." He *may* be right. And such a view has the recommendation of putting an end to the conjectures of fancy. It is common to interpret the *valley* as representing the low and depressed condition of the Jewish people at the time;—while, by one commentator, the *dark shade* of the myrtle-trees is interpreted as an aggravation of this meaning—representing their condition as *gloomy*, as well as depressed;—and

* Henderson.

† מַצְלוֹח—“a derivation from צָלַל to be *shaded, darkened*: hence the *shade* or *shady place*, probably that of a mountain.”—ED.

another, a good and popular commentator, finds in the myrtle-trees an apt emblem of the true people of God, among whom, as their Leader and Protector, Christ is ever to be found.* Taking my key from the “good and comfortable words” in which the general scope of the vision is subsequently explained, I am inclined to take a view of my own; and to understand the low-lying valley, environed by hills, as the emblem, on behalf of God’s people, of a state of *tranquil security* from their enemies, and the myrtles, the luxuriant ever-greens, as the apt symbol of *growing prosperity*,—the myrtle itself being understood as emblematic of *peace*. We shall see immediately how far this is in accordance with the explanation given to the prophet. This now claims our attention.

Verse 9. “Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.” Who is this angel that talked with him? It is clear, we answer, that it is a different angel from any in the group that formed the vision; to the whole of which group, inclusive of the Leader, the prophet’s question had reference. And, moreover, this “angel that talked with him”—that “communed with him”—appears throughout all the visions, as the *interpreting angel*; a divine messenger, commissioned from heaven to reply to his questions, and make him know God’s mind as conveyed by those visions. In the Book of Revelation, we find a similar interpreting angel attending John,—and showing that he was no more than a created angel, by his peremptory refusal of the homage which the Apostle, in mistake, fell down to offer him.

This angel appears to have been about to answer the prophet’s inquiry; when the Angel of the Covenant himself took the word: (verse 10) “And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.” While thus speaking he appears to have turned,

and pointed to those who were behind him, waiting his commands. By thus taking the word of explanation, he *excepts himself* from the description he gives, and renders it unnecessary for the interpreting angel to except him. Those to whom he pointed, and of whom he spoke, understanding the gesture, the look, and the words, as calling for a report of their last commission, give it, spontaneously, in the verse following:—"And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle-trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest." Their divine Leader needed not the information:—the information is meant for the prophet. At the same time, the report *is* given to the Leader. This brings before us (and similar representations occur in other parts of Scripture) the idea of the angels being the ministers of the divine government, waiting the behests of that government—"doing God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his words." They go forth on special errands. They return, and report their execution. In the vision before us, they appear as having been sent out to *reconnoitre*, and ascertain the present state of the surrounding nations; for these are evidently here specially intended by "the earth"—"the whole earth." The report was *pacific*. There had been "wars and rumours of wars;" but now all was "at rest and quiet." It had been by the Medo-Persian war, in which the Babylonian empire was overthrown by Cyrus, that the captives of Judah had obtained their edict from the conqueror, giving them liberty to return to their own land, and furnishing them with all facilities to do so, and means of effecting the restoration of their temple and their city, when there; an edict of which they *had* already begun to avail themselves, but, as we shall hereafter see, to a very partial extent. And now, after a short period of unsettledness—a kind of transition-state, all the nations round, that were wont to affect the condition of Israel, especially as occasional instruments of Jehovah's judicial inflictions, were in a state of repose.

I have already hinted that I conceive what follows, along

with what is thus reported by the commissioned angels, should be taken as the key of interpretation for the vision—as directly intended to set forth its leading scope, in answer to the prophet's question. This is obviously natural and reasonable:—verses 12, 13. “Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years? And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.” Observe here—

1. “The Angel of Jehovah,” * in verse twelfth, is evidently the same as “the Angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle-trees,” in the eleventh verse. We have considered *him* as the divine Angel of the Covenant. Will this be regarded by any as inconsistent with what is here ascribed to him,—*intercession for Israel*? By no one, surely, who attends to the harmony of the representations of the Old and the New Testaments, and who recollects that the second Person in the blessed Trinity was the appointed Mediator from the beginning; and that such intercession is one of his mediatorial functions. He who now having, “in the fulness of the time,” finished on earth his work of propitiation, “ever liveth making intercession” for his people, here appears, symbolically anticipating his mediatorial intercession,—and imploring the divine compassion and interposition in their behalf. The restoration of Judah from captivity was but begun. There were many still remaining in Babylon. Judea and Jerusalem were yet in a state of comparative solitude and desolation. A vast deal remained to be done for both the city and the country. “These threescore and ten years,” during which Jehovah had “had indignation” against both, evidently mean the predicted seventy years of divinely threatened and inflicted bondage; during which, “by the rivers of Babylon,” they had “sat and wept” at the remembrance of Zion: hanging their unstrung harps upon the willows. Now God's time of

* The reader need hardly be reminded that LORD in the authorised version, (from which the writer generally quotes) is *Jehovah* in the Hebrew.—ED.

mercy was come; and the intercession here is for the full manifestation of that mercy;—the full verification of the promises of Jehovah, as there had been of His threatenings.

What, then, is the reply?—Verse 13. “And Jehovah answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.” There is a difficulty here. Who is the speaker? He is called “*Jehovah*.” From the previous intercession being addressed to Jehovah, we are very naturally disposed to regard the *Jehovah* that answers as the same with the Jehovah addressed. But observe—the *Jehovah* that “answers” does not address his answer to “*the angel of Jehovah*” that had *pleaded in intercession*. It is to “*the angel that talked*” with the prophet. The *Being addressed* in the intercession of the Angel of the Covenant is the *Eternal Father*. But HE is not to be considered as appearing or speaking in the vision at all. And I quite concur in the conclusion that “*Jehovah*” in the thirteenth verse, who addresses the “good and comfortable words” to the interpreting angel, is the very same with “*the Angel of the Lord*” who intercedes in the verse preceding—the Divine Angel of the Covenant. If you reckon it harsh and gratuitous to suppose so immediate a transition from the designation “*the Angel of Jehovah*” to that of “*Jehovah*” itself; I have first to remind you that this Angel of Jehovah is *divine*, and that therefore there is nothing incongruous in the transition in itself; and then, secondly, to refer to a specimen of parallel cases—cases of the very same sudden transition. Compare Exod. iii. verse 2 and verse 4, “The ANGEL OF JEHOVAH appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And when JEHOVAH saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.” Also Judg. vi. ver. 12 and ver. 14. “The ANGEL OF JEHOVAH appeared unto him, and said unto him, JEHOVAH is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And JEHOVAH looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the

Midianites: have not I sent thee?" To these more might be added. It is "the Angel of the Covenant," then, that utters the "good words and comfortable words." The *Spirit* that was in the prophets—in whatever way making known the messages of God, was "the Spirit of Christ." But He spake then "by the prophets"—not directly, as in "the fulness of the time."

Then the "good and comfortable words" are communicated by the interpreting angel to the prophet, to be by him imparted to the people:—Verses 14—17. "So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction. Therefore thus saith the LORD, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem. Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad: and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem." In these verses, which, as has been said, are the *key* to the import of the previous vision, the following things may be noticed:—

1. The *jealousy*, or *zeal*, of Jehovah, in behalf of Jerusalem;—Jerusalem, as a matter of course, being inclusive of the chosen people. Being "*jealous* for Jerusalem with a great *jealousy*;" and being, as others render the words, "*zealous* for Jerusalem with a great *zeal*"—amount, in effect, to very much the same thing. He was "*jealous*," indignantly *jealous*, of every person and of every thing that could injuriously affect her interests:—and this is the very same state of feeling with being earnestly *zealous* for her good—for the promotion of her real well-being. Jerusalem was "the city that was called by His name"—"the place which He had chosen to put his name there." There was the temple—"the Zion of the Holy One of Israel;"—where He dwelt between the cherubim; where He had received the homage

of the seed of Abraham His "friend,"—the people of His choice and care—His "peculiar treasure." He had been many a time ill requited by them for special kindness. He had been constrained by their evil deserts to visit them with corrective judgments. But, in the midst of them all, they were still "beloved for the fathers' sakes." His eye and heart were still upon the Holy City. *He*, as well as His suffering people, "remembered Zion." Her ruined "walls were continually before Him." "His heart was turned within him. His repentings were kindled together." On many occasions He had shown special jealousy and zeal for them, —both providentially and miraculously; turning the counsels of their enemies into foolishness, and their might into weakness; and, after He had employed them as instruments of their correction, working their deliverance, and turning His vengeful hand against their adversaries, in requital of their malice and their cruelty. This leads me to observe—

2. His corresponding *heavy displeasure* against the enemies of Jerusalem; and *the cause* of that displeasure:—"I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction." The language here may be fairly interpreted, not *exclusively*, of the one particular case of judicial visitation from which the Jews were just obtaining deliverance, but of other cases too, where similar oppression had been practised towards them. "The heathen, or nations, *at ease*," might seem to have reference, immediately and solely, to the description in the eleventh verse of "all the earth being *still* and *at rest*." But the phrase "*being at ease*" is frequently, and probably here, used in a different and a bad sense, —as signifying not mere external repose and quiet, but *careless and carnal security*—"having no fear of God before their eyes."* And what was the *cause* of Jehovah's displeasure?—"for I was *a little* displeased, and they *helped forward the affliction*." The meaning evidently is, that,

* See *Psa.* cxxiii. 4 (probably the very language of the captives of Judah in Babylon or when leaving it for Jerusalem); *Amos* vi. 1; *Isa.* xxxii. 9 and 11; *Jer.* xlviii. 11.

without a thought of Jehovah,—bent upon the indulgence of their own lust of conquest, of power, of wealth, and, it might be, of spite and revenge, they stirred up all their malice, and took eager and full advantage of the license given them (though they knew it not) by the very God of the people they were delighting to plunder and oppress. They had got their commission from Him; but they did not fulfil it *for* Him, but *for themselves*, in all the wantonness of insult and outrage;—aggravating “the affliction” to the utmost limit of their power.—We have a fine illustration of the sentiment in this verse, in Isa. x. 5—27. If you read the whole chapter, you will find it, both in regard to God’s faithful care of His people, and to His indignation against their proud and cruel enemies, a lengthened commentary on the verse before us.

3. The *relenting compassions* of Jehovah towards His people, and His *promises* both to Jerusalem and Judea. In all the judgments brought upon them, the design was to bring *them* back to *Him*, that so *He* might come back in blessing to *them*. This is what He here engages to do. The temple was to rise again; His worship was to be re-established; and Jerusalem, in its environing walls, and in all its interior streets and dwellings and public places, to be laid out and built, and inhabited anew. And the whole land was to enjoy like prosperity; its cities growing in populousness, and in peace, and liberty, with all their attendant benefits. Jehovah was to “comfort Zion”—to “comfort all her waste places;” to compensate to her for all that she had passed through; again setting His heart on Jerusalem, as the object of His ancient choice. She was to have smiles after frowns; sunshine and calm after darkness and storm; visits of mercy, instead of visitations of wrath.

Have we not here, then, the clear and simple meaning of the symbols in the vision? Jehovah, with those heavenly hosts, which are His agents for judgment or for mercy, again takes His station near the forsaken city,—resuming the charge of His chosen people. The Red Horse is the apt emblem of His avenging jealousy on their behalf—denoting His readiness

and power to subdue and destroy their foes. The various colours of the horses of His followers signify that all His dispensations, of every description, through their agency, should be ordered for good to His people and His land. The *white* especially, being the last mentioned, were emblematic of the festive joy that yet awaited them, as the termination of their recent trials, through the same divine superintendence and control. And we are thus confirmed in the meaning we assigned to the valley and the flourishing myrtles,—as being significant of returning security, prosperity, peace, and growth. The land had long lain desolate; but now, “instead of the briar should come up the myrtle-tree:”—and, “as the mountains were round about Jerusalem, so the Lord would be round about his people.”

On the *second* vision—which, though distinct, and in its symbols even widely different, is yet closely connected with the first, it will not be needful at all to dwell:—verses 18—21. “Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns. And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. And the Lord showed me four carpenters. Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.” The prophet—still in the same *dream*, or in the same *trance*—“lifted up his eyes”—the scene before described having vanished,—and what did he see?—“*Four horns*,” but of what description of animal is not said:—and then, approaching towards them, “four *carpenters*” or rather, more generally, “*workmen*.”*

The explanation is simple. Throughout the Scriptures—in their prose or in their poetry—the Horn is the emblem of *power*; from a natural analogy which every one in a

* The word חָרָשׁ “a workman in iron, wood, stone,” &c., an *artizan*, an *artificer*; Ex. xxxv. 35; Deut. xxvii. 15; Comp. Gesen. in verb.—Ed.

moment recognizes. The *horns* here, then, are the symbols of the might of the adversaries of Israel. The *four* horns need not be regarded as pointing to any four particular powers; but rather as meaning hostile powers *on every side*—east, west, north, or south. The *workmen* denote antagonist powers, in the service of Jehovah, commissioned by Him to weaken and destroy those powers. When the interpreting angel says respecting the “four workmen,” “These are come to *fray* them”—an English reader may very naturally understand the word “*fray*” in a sense which is perfectly legitimate—and indeed even in Johnson the only sense given of it—the sense, I mean, of “*wearing down by friction*,” or, as we might say, *filting down the horns*; that is, gradually diminishing, and ultimately annihilating the symbolized powers. Such interpretation might seem specially suitable both to workmen and to that on which they were to work. The original word, however, has no such meaning. It signifies to *frighten*—to *terrify*.* And it is therefore in *this* sense that here, as in several other places, we must consider our translators as having used the word “*to fray*.” Thus—“Thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away.”† Again—“The carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.”‡ When the word in this sense is applied to *horns*, it is obvious, we are to conceive a transition from the literal symbol—the horn—to *the power represented by it*. Jehovah would employ His own agents, to terrify and scatter the powers that had terrified and scattered Judah and Israel.—To go further now would be to anticipate the remaining visions.

Meanwhile observe, in conclusion—

1. The same “Angel of the covenant”—Immanuel—the Divine Mediator—who had the charge of the interests of the

* It is the *hiph'el* form of the verb צָרַר *to tremble, to be terrified*. The verb to *fray* is used in the same sense as here both by Spencer and Bacon:—to *affright*, Fr. *effrayer*.—Ed.

† Deut. xxviii. 26.

‡ Jer. vii. 33.

church of God, and of the scheme of redemption, from the beginning, *has the charge still*. Having come, “in the fulness of time,” and executed his great commission of mercy to mankind, he is now “seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high.” Heaven and earth are at his command. All power in both worlds is His. The angels are still the messengers and ministers of His kingdom—“ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for the heirs of salvation.” He is “the prince of the kings of the earth;” having “on his vesture and on his thigh a name written—King of kings, and Lord of lords.” And as of old we find his treatment of all the surrounding nations regulated by their relation to Israel, and made to subserve his purposes in reference to that chosen people,—so still, in his conduct as “governor among the nations,” He directs and overrules all their counsels and all the events in their respective histories, more directly or more remotely, to subserve the ends of his exaltation and rule in regard to the interests—the varying fortunes, the progress, and the ultimate triumph of the “kingdom which is not of this world.” *His church* is secure,—what system soever that usurps the name may be in danger. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “No weapon that is formed against his spiritual Zion shall prosper;”—whether it be a weapon forged in the fires and on the anvil of persecution,—or framed in the brain and at the desk of infidelity and rationalism. “Every tongue that riseth against her in judgment He will condemn.” “All his enemies”—and the enemies of his church and cause—“shall be made his footstool.” It is on his *white horse* that he goes forth for his spiritual conquests. The sword which, on *that horse*, He wields, is “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” It is that divine Truth, which is “the power of God unto salvation.”—But on the *red horse*, He may still execute his vengeance on those persecuting powers of earth that have, at different periods, wasted his church, and poured out the blood of his saints. His own spiritual people are forbidden to unsheath the sword for such a purpose. But He can

make other earthly powers his agents in this righteous vengeance,—“giving them blood to drink, for they are worthy.” He “treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.”

2. In times of depression and distress,—when the hand of God has been upon his people, laying them low on account of their backslidings and sins; and when the corrective strokes of that hand have brought them to a right mind; to a submissive and penitential state of feeling;—to a due sense and acknowledgment of God’s righteousness, and of the indispensable necessity of his restored favour to safety and to happiness;—to an influential conviction of the guilt alike and the folly of “forsaking the fountain of living water, and hewing out cisterns of their own, broken cisterns that can hold no water:”—and when, in such a state of mind and heart, they come to Him, saying—“Take away our iniquity, and receive us graciously;”—what “good words and comfortable words” He has ever in readiness for them! “I will heal their backslidings; I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from them. I will be as the dew unto Israel; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, and send forth their roots as Lebanon!” With what “exceeding great and precious promises” he meets them! Many of these promises are made to the church collectively,—and even relate to future periods of her history. But as utterances of the state of God’s heart towards His people,—they are as appropriate and as precious to each of them individually as to the collective body. Every one may take the comfort they are fitted to afford. Let one serve as a specimen:—“But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ran-

som, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.”* The promise is to the Church *collectively*, in all seasons of persecuting cruelty and violence. And how wonderfully has it been fulfilled! Through what floods and flames has the Church been brought! The floods have not overwhelmed, nor the flames consumed her. And so it will be to the end.—But every section of the Church, in seasons of difficulty and trial, and every individual child of God, in times of personal and domestic privation and suffering, may, with perfect propriety, appropriate the promise, and draw from it all the sweetness, and all the refreshing and vivifying influence, it is fitted to yield. How rich in consolation are such “GOOD WORDS”—words coming from the lips of divine faithfulness and love,—when the spirit is cast down, and the heart agonized and ready to break, under such afflictions as bring nature’s feelings into torturing conflict with the principles of grace! How often has such a promise—such a “good and comfortable word”—been the oil on the restless and turbulent wave,—soothing the inward tumult to repose,—giving it to find “rest in the Lord!”—O how thankful we should be, that *any* words of a holy and just God were ever “good and comfortable” to sinful and guilty creatures. They might have been all words of “condemnation and wrath.” *Had* they been so, who among the sons of men would have had just cause to complain? But it is not so. He has “good words and comfortable words” even for the chief of sinners. To *all* he says—“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”† And he adds—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.” But remember—he has *no* good words—no comfortable words, either to backsliders *continuing in their backslidings*, or to sinners *persisting in their sins*.

* Isa. xliii. 1—3.

† Matt. xi. 28—30.

LECTURE III.

ZECH. II.

“I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring-line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, and said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein: for I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her. Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the Lord; for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in the midst of thee: and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.”

WE mentioned formerly, that the first portion of this Book of Zechariah consisted of a series of visions, presented to the entranced mind of the prophet, in the course of the same night. We had two of these visions before us in last lecture. This chapter contains the *third*. It is evidently a continuation of the same subject,—the rebuilding and re-occupation of Jerusalem and the Temple. It is of

the most encouraging and animating character, both for the time then present and for days in remote futurity.

Our first inquiry, then, is, *What did the prophet see?*—verses 1—3: “I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring-line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him.” Agreeably to the use of the same modes of expression in the former visions—especially the first, the “*man*” with the “measuring-line in his hand” was an *angel* in human form; these “ministering spirits” being clearly the agents in these scenic representations. And I may here remark by the way, that the scenery of each of these visions, when presented in succession, should be conceived of as vanishing; each being complete in itself,—and no part of its agency to be borrowed from those which precede. I do not mean that there is no connexion between the successive visions as to the nature and extent of their progressive discoveries. What I mean is, simply, that as each vision is seen, the apparatus of it disappears, and the ground is cleared for the next. The only exception which I should be disposed to make to this statement relates to the *interpreting angel*—called by the prophet “*the angel that talked with me*”—“*the angel that communed with me*,”—who appears to continue the same throughout all the visions, though he is not in all of them introduced. Seeing “the man with the measuring-line” advancing onwards, as if for some special purpose, the prophet, in eager and interested curiosity, does not apply to the interpreter, but seems in the vision, to accost the measurer himself. The question put by him, “*Whither goest thou?*” evidently implies more than it expresses,—not only to what place, but *for what purpose—what to do?* It was enough to ask *whither?*—because the purpose was implied in the professional instruments which he carried with him. The answer—“to measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof,”—corresponds

with the terms of the first vision : *—"Therefore, thus saith the Lord, I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem." The taking of the measurements was a preparatory step for what was to follow—the full re-erection of the city, and its restored population; for what would building have been without peopling? The measurements now to be taken, I agree with those who think, were not the measurements of the future city, but of the city as it had been, and as, in its ruins, it now lay. It was to ascertain the extent of the work which required to be done for its restoration. It seems quite a mistake to assume, as some do, that the act of measuring proceeds on the supposition of the re-building having been already effected, and that the intended visionary mensuration related to the future,—to what the city *was to be*. We shall see immediately what is said of *that*,—that the extent of the city was to be such as, in a manner, to supersede the necessity of measuring.

Meanwhile, three questions require to be answered, to clear our way to the simple explication of all that follows:—

1. Who is meant by "*the angel that talked with him?*" I should hardly have thought of such a question, indeed, had it not been for the following words of Scott:—"If the angel who talked with the prophet was the same with the man who 'stood among the myrtle-trees'—the Angel of the Covenant, the Word and Son of God, *as it seems most probable*, the man with the measuring-line must have been a created angel in human form." Of the latter there can, I think, be no doubt. But that "the angel who talked with the prophet" was the same with the man among the myrtle-trees in the first vision, is anything but *probable*. It seems to me decidedly wrong. The man "among the myrtle-trees"—the Angel of the Covenant, is, in that vision, expressly distinguished from the "angel that talked with the prophet." The latter is in that vision,—and so, therefore,

when the same designation is used, he should be considered in this,—*the interpreting angel*. 2. Our next inquiry is—Who is meant by the “*other angel*,” that “went out to meet” the interpreting angel, on his “going forth?” Some conceive him to have been an ordinary created angel, who “went out” from the presence of the Angel of the Covenant. There is an objection to this, which I cannot get over. To me it is clear, that all that follows in the chapter is the utterance of *one speaker*. There is no indication of change. Now the speaker is *this angel*. Yet, as we shall see, there are things said by him in his own person, such as cannot be made to accord with the idea of his being no more than a created angel. While he speaks in Jehovah’s name, he, at the same time, speaks as sustaining the same divine character himself, and as doing things such as the divine Being alone could do. My own conviction is—and the assumption, it will, I think, be found, gives unity and consistent simplicity to all that follows,—that this “*other angel*” is *himself* the same with “the man among the myrtle-trees,”—is *himself* the divine “Angel of the Covenant.” This supposition agrees with the representations of the first vision. *There*, you will remember, it is *He* that communicates to the interpreting angel the “good words and comfortable words,” which that angel immediately imparts to the prophet, with the charge to proclaim them. Now so it is here. The Angel of the Covenant himself meets and accosts the interpreting angel, and gives him his message for the prophet. The only difference between this and the former case is,—that in *this* the message is recorded simply as communicated to the interpreting angel, without the intervening link of its communication from him to the prophet, and the prophet’s publication of it. I cannot but think that this view of the matter gives simplicity to the contents of the vision, greater than any I have seen in the different commentators.

3. Our *third* question is—Who is the “*young man*,” to whom the interpreting angel is ordered to impart the message?—I have already anticipated the answer I am disposed to give to it. I think the most common idea the right one,

—that the “young man” is *the prophet*.* Stonard, and Henderson, and others, conceive him to have been “the man with the measuring line.” The sole consideration in support of this idea that appears to have any force, is to be found in the word “*Run*.” This, it is alleged, “implies the necessity of despatch, which could only have been occasioned by the intended procedure of the measurer,”—as if the word could only signify, make haste to overtake him. For, as regards the farther allegation, that “he had no need to run, or to move at all, in order to speak to Zechariah, who certainly remained where he was,”—it appears to be forgotten, that, though the prophet “remained where he was,” the interpreting angel did *not* remain where *he* was. He is expressly said to have “gone forth;” that is, manifestly, from his position beside the prophet:—“and behold, the angel that talked with me *went forth*.” For what purpose he went forth, or to what distance he had proceeded, is not, in either case, said; and nothing can be allowed to rest on mere conjecture. But just suppose that the “other angel” who goes out to meet him, when he has left the prophet, is the Angel of the Covenant—and the command to “run and speak to this young man” (understanding the young man to mean the prophet) has a meaning imparted to it that is at once appropriate and pleasing. It is as if he had said, Do not quit your post. Keep not my servant in suspense: run, speak to him: give him the following message for my people. The prophet had asked the question—“Whither goest thou?” with eager and impatient curiosity. It was *for him*, assuredly, that the information, whatever it might be, was intended; and *to him* the Divine Prophet of the church, the Angel of the Covenant, commands it to be immediately imparted.

There are questions of still more importance. *On what principle* is the subsequent information, or message, to be interpreted?—the *literal*, or the *spiritual*?—that which confines it to the theocratic or Old Economy, or that which refers

* So Blayney, Rosenmüller, Hengstenberg and others.—Ed.

it to Gospel times, and the Church in New Testament days? To such questions I am disposed to answer—On neither principle exclusively, but partly on the one and partly on the other: that is, not applying both principles to each portion of the vision, but the one to the former, and the other to the latter part of it. Let me not, however, be understood as if there were no cases in which the application of *both* principles might properly be made to the same vision or prediction. Far from it. There may be, and frequently there is, a *literal* meaning which *typically* involves a *spiritual*, and a *present* which thus involves a *future*. But as to the views of those interpreters who take the whole of the vision before us spiritually as well as literally, and apply it to the future as well as to the present and then existing dispensation,—and to the spiritual and future chiefly,—who *will* have what is here said of the extension of Jerusalem's boundaries, and increase of her population, as having reference to the spread of the Gospel in the New Testament era, and the multiplication, by the conversion of sinners, of the subjects of the spiritual Jerusalem—the Church of Christ,—and who interpret the victory over her enemies, and the subjugation of those enemies by whom they had been oppressed, and at whose hands they had suffered, as finding its proper counterpart in the cessation of persecution, and the subjection of the Roman empire by Constantine to Christian instead of pagan dominion;—I cannot but regard such views as utterly out of place, and sheer extravagance;—even apart from their inadmissibleness on other grounds,—such as reckoning among the Church's benefits and blessings some of her really worst calamities! It is, at the same time, true, that in the writings of the Prophets we often find abrupt and sudden transitions; the prophetic eye, while surveying the near in time, darting forward under the impulse and illumination of the prophetic Spirit, to the distant future,—the glory and felicity of the coming Messiah's kingdom bursting unexpectedly on the enraptured vision:—the inspired seer, ere he is aware, “rapt into future times,” and then “inquiring and searching diligently, what and what manner of times the Spirit within him

signified." My belief regarding the utterance we are now to expound is—that the language from verse fourth to verse ninth has immediate, and I think I may venture to add *exclusive*, reference to the literal Jerusalem and the then existing theocratic dispensation; and that the subsequent verses, from verse tenth to the end, cannot be consistently explained otherwise than as looking forward to the Messiah's appearance and reign. Let us take the portions of the vision thus distinctly, though in inseparable connexion.

1. What is said, in the way of promissory assurance, respecting the literal Jerusalem,—the city which of old Jehovah had chosen, "to place His name there,"—which had so long, in punishment of the sins of its inhabitants, been lying desolate,—free of profanation, and "enjoying its Sabbaths,"—a sad reflection on the worshippers by whom those Sabbaths had been desecrated?—*Three things* are promised—*extension, security, glory*.

i. *Extension*:—verse 4. "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein." There is a correspondence, as already noticed, between this and the representation in the first vision.* The expression "Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls"—or "as unwall'd villages,"—or, as a modern translator renders it, "into the open country,"—has a meaning sufficiently obvious; namely, that the former limits of the city which "the man with the measuring line" was about to take, would be too straitened for the number of its inhabitants; so that they would spread themselves out into the surrounding localities. Now, there is no occasion whatever for going forward to Gospel times, and seeking a spiritual accomplishment of this prediction or promise. It was literally verified. Even by such as are most enamoured of the spiritual interpretation, it is distinctly admitted, that "the inhabitants grew to a number beyond the capacity of the city, in its ancient dimensions, to supply them with dwellings." And this accords with the testimony of Josephus, who says

* Comp. Chap. i. 16, 17.

—“Overflowing with numbers, it gradually crept out beyond its walls; and the citizens, joining the parts, that lay northward of the temple, to the hill, went forward to a considerable distance, till they had covered with their habitations a fourth hill, called Bezetha.” For a time, immediately after the return from Babylon, under Nehemiah, the building and extension were rapid. The progress suffered many an interruption,—adverse and prosperous seasons,—opposition and favour; till, in the period of the heroic and patriotic Maccabees, in the very terms of a spiritualizing commentator, “Jerusalem, blessed with freedom and prosperity, filled the extent of her walls with citizens, resumed her royal insignia under native princes, overpassed her former boundaries,—and, as the head of a populous and extensive territory, rose to a state of opulence, power, dignity, and splendour, which she had not known since the division of Israel and Judah.”* Is not this enough? What further accomplishment of the assurance before us could be wished?

ii. *Security*.—This, indeed, might be considered as implied, to a certain extent, in the preceding particular. The very idea of dwelling “*without walls*” implies that of *confidence*, or *felt safety*. But mark the striking promise—verse 5. “For I, saith Jehovah, *will be a wall of fire round about her.*” The figure is a vivid and most expressive one. As a literal “wall of fire,” environing a city would effectually prevent intrusion by consuming all who should venture to attempt it; so would Jehovah’s avenging jealousy destroy every assailant of the holy city. He Himself would be its unseen but sure protection. Had the inhabitants of the city—had Israel and Judah generally—in former days, exercised and exemplified *faith in God*, putting their trust in His promises, walking in His fear, and maintaining the purity of His worship and the practice of His laws,—its walls had never been overthrown, nor its temple demolished; it would have been as safe without walls as with them; it would never have experienced its seventy years of desolation, nor its

* Stonard, p. 71.

people the same period of captivity and oppression. And now, when He had begun to accomplish their promised restoration, He engages to invest their city anew with His all-protecting presence and power:—invisible, but unfailing. The figure bears resemblance to the vision by which the servant of Elisha was assured of the safety of his master, when his escape seemed impossible: “And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots: and his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do? And he answered, Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.”*

3. *Glory*.—This, you will perceive, refers to the latter half of the same verse—“*and the glory in the midst of her.*” Jehovah’s presence—“dwelling between the cherubim”—worshipped before the mercy-seat—was from the beginning, and all along the true glory of the ancient Jerusalem. It was not the mere presence of the symbol, but the presence of HIMSELF. It is true the *Shechinah* was glorious. But its chief glory lay in its being the visible symbol of an invisible glory infinitely surpassing its own. It seems strange, therefore, for any *Christian* commentator, at any rate, to object to the application of the words to the literal Jerusalem, that there is no evidence of the *Shechinah* having taken visible occupancy of the second temple, as it did of the first; when it is recorded that “the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord.” It may be so; but if JEHOVAH HIMSELF was there, the *true* glory was there. The other is a sadly Jewish notion. *They* were ready to say “the glory is departed from Israel,” when “the ark of God was taken.” But it was when by their sins they drove Jehovah himself, in

* 2 Kings vi. 15—17.

judicial displeasure, away from them, that the glory really departed. What *then* could the ark do for them? Nay, what the temple itself, with its holy of holies, and all its outward ritual? The carnal, worldly-minded Jews trusted in the external glories—in the cloud, and the fire, and the temple, and the ark, and the altar, and the pomp of the Levitical ceremonial. These they counted their glory, and the glory of their city. But this was their error. It was the presence of Jehovah that was their real glory:—His presence, in the exercise, on their behalf, of His power, and wisdom, and goodness. The promise is similar to that given by Jehovah through the prophet Haggai:—"Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."* If *He* took up anew his abode there,—*that* would be their true glory,—whether the symbol of his presence accompanied Him or not. And *He* would be glorified, at once in the worship there rendered Him, and in the "wonders and the judgments" there wrought by Him in behalf of His people, for their deliverance from thralldom, their protection in difficulty and danger, the assertion of their liberties, the vindication of their rights, and the avengement of their wrongs. Their glory would be His glory, and His glory theirs.

The two following verses are in close connexion with the promise of the extending population of Jerusalem. We formerly had occasion to mention, that the return from Babylon had as yet little more than begun. And to those Jews who still remained there, in "the land of the North"—the province of Babylon—the invitation, or injunction, in these words, is addressed. Various might be the motives by which those who remained might be influenced in staying where they were. Indolence, and indisposition to move, unless under a very powerful inducement of some worldly and self-interested kind,—the wealth they had amassed in Babylon,—coupled with indifference about their religion, and even a

* Haggai i. 7, 8.

prevailing spirit of worldly infidelity;—a concern for nothing beyond present enjoyment, and a sense of its having, as far as they could look for it, been found,—and what was it to them *where*? What to them was one country better than another, further than as they enjoyed what alone they cared for—the possessions and pleasures of this world? To all who still lingered there is the call to come forth addressed. And the kindness of Jehovah is apparent in this. It is like the call to Lot and his family, to escape from the destruction that was impending over “the cities of the plain:”—and like the call to His people to come out from the mystical Babylon, that they might not be “partakers of her plagues.” For the doom of Babylonia, “the land of the North,” was coming. And, while the lingering Jews were hugging themselves in the self-complacent thought that they were saving themselves all the toil and trouble of their countrymen who were making their way back to Palestine and Jerusalem, the day of the Lord’s vengeance on Babylon might be near, and might overtake them in their unpatriotic as well as infidel security and selfishness.

The connexion of the former part of this verse with the latter seems strange. The latter appears as if it assigned a reason for compliance with the call in the former. “Ho! ho! flee from the land of the north; *for* I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the Lord.” It is surely a strange idea of an able critic who spiritualizes the whole passage,—that the call is not a call to quit Babylon for Judea at all; but that it is a *prediction* (in which, according to what is often the prophetic style, what is yet future is spoken of as if past) of the Jews being thereafter, not scattered by judicial violence, but spread abroad among the nations for the diffusion of the Gospel, and the promotion of the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah. “The proclamation,” says that critic, “may be paraphrased thus:—‘Think not, O my people, of fixing yourselves and your inheritances in the land of Babylon. You must quickly prepare to depart thence; for I have fully purposed to send you forth into all countries, spreading you as the four winds of heaven;

that ye may be the means of conveying to mankind spiritual knowledge, rational fears, and lofty hopes, as is suitable to the children of that great patriarch, in whose seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed:—"They are here sent forth from Babylon, with a commission to bear this testimony all abroad, like the four winds of heaven, stretching 'their line through all the earth,' and carrying 'their words unto the end of the world.'" This, and much more to the same purpose, seems to be altogether beside the point of the vision, and unnaturally forced. There can hardly be a doubt in any one's mind, that the call is a call from Babylon back to Judea; a call to all who remained there to avail themselves of the way of return which Jehovah, in faithfulness to His engagement, and in His covenant mercy, had opened for them. Still there is difficulty in seeing the exact bearing of the reason *apparently* assigned. I am disposed to acquiesce in the judgment of a still more recent critic, that the expression—"I have scattered you *as* the four winds of heaven" does not refer to the *extent* of their dispersion, but to the *power* by which it had been effected. It is not said *to* the four winds, but *as* the four winds.* My power has dispersed you from your land, even as the four winds of heaven, combining their strength, would scatter whatever opposed them. And it seems to me to be *implied*, though not expressed, that the power which had scattered them had opened the way for their return, and was able to effect it in safety against all opposition. It seems difficult at all to make sense of the passage otherwise. That the intimation of a *future* more extensive dispersion of the same people should be used as a motive to their fleeing from a particular quarter of their *present* more limited dispersion is out of the question. There is no tracing of any connexion of inducement between the one and the other. The mode of address, at the same time, reminds them of another thing,—that, although it was by force they had been *driven from*

* Some adopt a various reading נ for כ; but while, as Henderson observes, the former is not suitable in sense, the latter reading is superior in authority.—Ed.

their country, it must be of their own free-will that they *return to it*. The power of God was not to compel and drive them back. It had only made the way clear; and stood engaged for their protection from enemies, and their aid in straits and difficulties, on their obeying His summons to return.

In the next two verses, we have inducements to such compliance, in full correspondence with what we have just been saying:—verses 8, 9. “For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me.” “*After the glory.*” Without troubling you with any attempt to make you understand the verbal criticism which has been bestowed on these words, I satisfy myself with remarking, that the simplest and most natural interpretation is that which makes them refer to the fulfilment of the promise in the fifth verse—“I will be the glory in the midst of her.” When this has been fulfilled,—when Jehovah’s house has been built, and He has returned and taken possession of it, and become anew the glory of His people and His city;—then, says the speaker, “He hath sent me unto the nations which spoiled you;” words, of which, in the connexion, the most appropriate interpretation seems to be, that Jehovah had given him a commission against those nations.* And this interpretation is supported by two considerations:—*First*, it is in exact accordance with the intimations given in the first of these visions:—“And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a

* Similarly Dr. Henderson: “It can only be employed to denote the posteriority of the mission specified to the restoration of the glorious presence of the manifested Jehovah to his recovered people.” Gesenius, Ewald, and other high authorities render, “*He hath sent me after glory,*” i. e. to acquire it. But this Henderson seems justly to reject on the ground that אחר is not elsewhere employed except as an adverb.—ED.

little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction :” *— and *secondly*, the words which follow in the ninth verse here confirm it :—“ For, behold, I will shake mine hand at them ”—the attitude of threatening ; and, by the execution of that threatening, “ they shall be a spoil to their servants ”—or rather to their *slaves* :—that is, the tables shall be turned ; and they shall be spoiled by those whom they reduced to bondage. The spoilers shall become the spoiled, the oppressors the enslaved. There is no necessity for confining this to *the Jewish people* alone. There might be others besides them over whom *their* oppressors had tyrannized : and no matter whether the retribution was to come immediately from the Jews themselves, or from others—*come it should*.

And all this was to be the result and manifestation of Jehovah’s tender care for His people :—“ for whoso toucheth you, toucheth the apple,” or the *pupil* “ of his eye.” There are some critics who would take from us this exquisitely beautiful expression of the jealous affection of God toward his people. They explain it as meaning—“ He that toucheth you toucheth the pupil of *his own* eye ;” that is, he that injures you does wrong to himself. It is a truth. But it is a truth, just because the other is a truth ; and because he who injures God’s people—the objects of this jealous affection and care,—ensures retribution from *Him*. We are unwilling, we confess, to give up the ordinary, and very interesting and delightful, import of the words. And glad we feel, that we are not only under no necessity of parting with it, but that, when tested by the leading design of the whole passage (the only proper test) we have the strongest ground for retaining it. The design is, the encouragement of God’s people to comply with the summons addressed to them. And, tried by its comparative force *as a motive*, who can for a moment hesitate?†

* Chap. i. 15.

† “ The pronominal affix in עֵינֶיךָ, *his eye*, is to be referred to יְהוָה Jehovah of hosts at the beginning of the verse, the nominative to שְׁלָחֵנִי, and not with Kimchi, Blayney, Stonard and others to the enemy himself. *Henderson*.—ED.

It is a charming image. The eye is one of the most intricate and delicate structures in the human frame; and the pupil of the eye—the opening by which the light of heaven enters for the purposes of vision, the most delicate and easily injured, as well as important, part of that structure. Nothing can more finely convey the idea of the sensitively tender care of Jehovah for the objects of His love. There are many figures in the Bible, expressive of the same sentiment: there is no one more exquisitely beautiful than this.

You must have observed the evidence of the *divinity* of the speaker here, in the terms used by him in the ninth verse—“*I will shake my hand at them.*” This can be the language of no other than Jehovah; and yet it is the language of one who speaks of “*Jehovah*” as having “*sent him.*” There does not appear to be any reasonable explanation of this, but our considering the speaker as the Divine Angel of the Covenant. And the remaining verses present us with additional evidence of it. I shall not dwell on the manner in which the spiritualizers of the previous part of the vision explain the language of the ninth verse; applying it, as they do, like what we noticed before, to the triumph of the Christians over their contumelious and persecuting enemies in Constantine’s time! Those enemies had “treated them with contempt and insult, violence and cruelty, as the most despicable portion of their slaves.” But *then* the spoilers, they allege, became the spoiled. “The Christians are truly said to have spoiled the heathen” (such are the terms of one of the ablest of those who apply the part of the vision that has been before us to Gospel times) “when they took possession of the supreme government, the offices of State, and all the important posts, civil, military, and ecclesiastical, which had hitherto been in heathen hands. They further spoiled them, by turning the idolatrous temples into Christian churches; and above all, by depriving Rome of her supremacy, as the Queen of cities and Head of empire, when Constantinople was made, in point of dignity, her rival, and in point of imperial favour her superior. Thus did the Lord of hosts, the Son of God, go forth after the glory, shake his hand over the

Heathen Empire, break its horn, and make the imperial people a spoil to their servants.”* Plausible as all this may seem, we have two objections to it. The *first* is, that we do not think it has any business here, as part of the exposition of the former portion of this vision: and the *second* is, that while we cannot hinder those who are so disposed thus to glory in the events referred to—the assumption of Christianity into union with the State as the established religion of the Roman Empire; and the Christian church under the patronage and supervision of the Roman Government, and a legally chartered incorporation,—we are unable to view them in the same favourable light. We cannot say “This is the Lord’s doing:”—for, considering all its more immediate and more remote consequences to the Church of God,—as having been, indeed, to a great degree, the causal prelude to the introduction and domination of Antichrist, in all the branches of his power—we think we have better reason to regard it as the doing of the adversary, and one of his most masterly doings too. And, while we *may* add—“it is wondrous in our eyes,” our wonder is rather at the mystery of God’s providence in permitting it, than at the magnitude of God’s favour in bestowing it, as a boon upon His church.

These views, at the same time, are perfectly consistent with our understanding the latter part of this vision as looking forward to times beyond the period of the Jewish theocracy,—to the times of Messiah—to both the earlier and remoter times of His kingdom,—its erection at His first coming, and its later triumphant consummation. But, as we shall find still more pointed and ample reference to these times and their events in the subsequent visions, we shall do no more now than briefly indicate the principles of exposition for the closing verses of the chapter:—“Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my

* Stouard, p. 99.

people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee. And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation."

We find it impossible to explain these verses otherwise than as referring to Messiah's coming and kingdom. We *might* indeed contrive so to explain the tenth verse; but how the eleventh?—"and many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day." We have seen that Messiah is the speaker. When was this ever accomplished, unless by the gathering of the Gentiles under subjection to his spiritual dominion? Taking the tenth verse, then, as in connexion with the eleventh, we are constrained to view it as Messiah's promise of His own coming; His coming in the flesh, and dwelling in His wonderful person, as God-man, among his own people:—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord." And the interpretation is fully established by a comparison of the passage with others. For example:—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."* We are quite sure of the reference of *these* words; and there is no resisting the parallelism. Again:—"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."† And lastly:—"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."‡ Here was the fulfilment; here was his "dwelling in the midst of them." Gentiles as well as Jews were to be the subjects of that kingdom. There was to be no such exclusiveness as the latter proudly and selfishly imagined.

* Chap. ix. 9.

† Mal. iii. 1.

‡ John i. 14.

Yet, at the same time, it was to be on the principle—"to the Jew first." It was among that people He was to appear and to dwell, while on earth. And, when the mass of his own people according to the flesh "rejected and despised him," and he took the Gentiles who believed in their room;—yet were the chosen people not to be utterly and finally cast off. He would again, "in the latter days," return to them in mercy; gather from their so much wider and so much longer continued dispersions;—restore them anew to the land of their fathers, and the city of their God:—verse 12. "And the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again." How far such promises as this are to be literally or spiritually fulfilled to the remnant of Israel, will come, by and by, to be the subject of special inquiry. We cannot touch it now. But, on this twelfth verse we have an apostolic commentary, so far as simple *future restoration* is concerned, in the Epistle to the Romans,—“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”* And how remarkable is the coincidence between the language in which Paul closes his discussion of “this mystery,” and the divine Speaker’s more brief, but not less emphatic summons to reverential awe in the passage

* Rom. xi. 25—32.

before us!—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever!"*—and here, "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation." Similar calls to silent awe, and reverential contemplation of the divine doings, and of the divine character as embodied and developed in those doings, are not infrequent in Scripture:—"Be still, and know that I am God!"—"Thou, even thou, art to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight, when once thou art angry? Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth feared, and was still, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth:"—"Hold thy peace, at the presence of the Lord God: for the day of the Lord is at hand."†

We must close with two or three brief practical reflections:—

1. While we disown the reference of the former portion of the vision to Gospel times, and to the spiritual or New Testament Jerusalem, we are very far from disowning the applicability to the latter of what is said in the former. For example, we rejoice in admitting, to their utmost possible extent, whatever sayings are here respecting the *extension*, the *security*, and the *glory* of the literal Jerusalem as equally true of the spiritual and heavenly. In regard to *extension*—to the multiplication of the inhabitants of *the latter*, there are no limits short of the numbers of the race in all its successive generations. How many soever the thousands and tens of thousands that have become its citizens, and partakers of its privileges and its hopes,—“yet there is room.” The community being a spiritual one, and the city to which they belong the “Jerusalem which is above,” there are no other bounds to admission. And extension of population, though

* Rom. xi. 33—36.

† Psalm xlv. 10; lxxvi. 7—9; Zeph. i. 7.

not of local limits, is its predicted and promised destination. It is to comprehend men of "every kindred and people and nation and tongue." The inhabitants are at length to be "a multitude which no man can number." The heavenly city will contain them all. And when at length they are all collected within its walls, O let sinners remember, extension, increase, will be at an end. The increase must be on earth. There will be none from hell. The gulf will be impassable, and eternal.—Then, in regard to *security*. The "wall of fire"—the rampart of omnipotence—invests the New Testament church, as thoroughly, effectually, and constantly, as it did the Old. We know Him who hath said, "On this rock"—the rock of the great truth which Peter had confessed, and which he fastened in his memory by associating it with his name,—“On this rock will I build my church: and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” It is to the church, to the end of time, that Jehovah hath said, "Fear not; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine: when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." What church soever, then, may be in danger,—“the church of the living God”—“the Zion of the Holy One of Israel”—never is, never can be. The eternity of the Church is as sure as the eternity of God. Earth and hell combined are impotence itself against the pledged omnipotence of heaven. "If God be for His church, who can be against her?" What foe can penetrate the "wall of fire?"—Lastly, in regard to *glory*. As "the glory of the second temple was to be greater than the glory of the first," by the reception within its sacred precincts of Immanuel himself—"God manifest in the flesh"—so will the glory of the New Testament church ever be greater than that of the Old. Immanuel is still in it, and will be for ever. He is "the glory in the midst of it," and will be for ever!—and in Him

the full glory of Deity is seen in lights in which it never had been seen before. And his throne will be the central point of heaven;—his Father's and his own,—the united glory of that pure and happy world. Of all the blessed inhabitants "the Lord shall be the everlasting light, and their God their glory!"

2. The people of God may now, as well as of old, and even more emphatically, appropriate the divine assurance—"He that toucheth you, toucheth the pupil of his eye." "In all their afflictions," now as well as then, "he is afflicted." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee." "He *careth* for His children:" and by this assurance they are encouraged to "cast all their care upon Him." Yes, my brethren. And the same thing is true of "Jesus, the divine Mediator of the new covenant." He is "not an high priest who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin;" and who, "having himself suffered being tempted," and having "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," is "able to succour them that are tempted." And so does he identify himself with his people, and his own interests with theirs, that with regard both to good and evil, to benefit and to injury, he says—"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did unto ME." What a spring of consolation to believers in every hour of darkness,—whosoever or whatsoever be the cause of their sorrow—"Whoso toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye!" And let the enemies of his people fear. If you are wronging, in selfish malice, or in hatred of their principles and their godliness, any of the true Israel of God,—you are "touching the pupil of the divine eye." The Father feels it. The Son feels it. It will not be unpunished.

3. We ought to be earnest in persuading God's people,—as many of them as are to be found there, and to whom we have access,—to "*come forth*" and "*flee*" from the *mystical*

Babylon. We should, as far as our voice, in any way, can reach, say to them—"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers in her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues!" Never was there greater need; and never was there better and more extensive opportunity. And, on the same principle, we should be earnest in urging sinners to "come forth" and "flee" *from the world*;—to "escape for their lives" from that spiritual Sodom, and to seek their safety in the spiritual Zion, in union with God's people,—with those who themselves have "fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them." As there was no safety for the Israelites in Babylon, but impending and sure destruction; so is there no safety for sinners, remaining in the society and courses of the world. "Their judgment lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not." O let none make light of divine warnings, or of any divine communications. "Great fear is due unto God; he is to be had in reverence of all that are about him." It becomes "all flesh to be silent before HIM." And when, at the close of our world's history—when, in the final judgment, the words shall be more signally verified than at any previous period, how awful soever, of His providential administration,—“He is roused out of his holy habitation,”—roused for the last great act of justice and of mercy,—to pronounce the dooms, and fix for eternity the conditions, of all the assembled millions of mankind,—*then* “all flesh *shall* be silent before Him,” in “listening fear and dumb amazement,” waiting their final verdicts;—verdicts of gracious acceptance, or verdicts of righteous condemnation; both ensured by a power which none can resist. The way to obtain the one, and to escape the other, is now before you. “Through Jesus Christ is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.” Flee to the CROSS. Flee to the altar on which “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world” was offered. *Take* hold, and *keep* hold, of the horns of that altar. And thus, may none of you ever know, in your experience, how “fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God!”

LECTURE IV.

ZECH. III.

“And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment. And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the Lord stood by. And the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among those that stand by. Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee; for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant The BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.”

In last lecture, I expressed my conviction that, in this series of visions, each should be taken distinctly;—that is, that as another is introduced, the persons and scenery of the preceding ones are to be considered as entirely withdrawn. The only exception I was disposed to make to the observation was, that the *interpreting angel* appears, through all the visions, to continue the same. I am led at present to repeat the remark for this reason—that an eminent commentator on the Book, in considering the question who is meant in the

beginning of this chapter when it is said, "HE showed me," finds a difficulty in understanding this of the "angel interpreter," in his having been "sent with the message delivered in the preceding part to the measurer of the holy city, and *not having yet returned*," so that he could not, as he concludes, be "then by the side of Zechariah."* On that passage, I endeavoured to show that the interpreting angel had been met, when he went out from beside the prophet, by the Angel of the Covenant, and sent back immediately to the prophet with important and encouraging tidings, both for the time then present and ages more remote.—But apart from this; the difficulty proceeds on the assumption (which I cannot but think a groundless one) that the scenery of the previous visions remained as before, and that the successive visions were portions of *one*. Not only is this assumption, in my apprehension, groundless; it appears to be one which would produce inextricable confusion. On the proof of this, however, it is needless to dwell. I shall take it for granted that by *He* is here meant the interpreting angel—"the angel that talked with him,"—as in the first verse of the fourth chapter, "And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep."

What was now shown to the prophet? According to the promises made in the former visions, Jerusalem was to be rebuilt; and the three blessings of extension, security, and glory, were to be conferred upon her. "The glory in the midst of her" was to be JEHOVAH HIMSELF—dwelling of course in His temple. But that implies the full re-establishment of *His worship*, in all its previous divinely instituted typical splendour. What would Jerusalem be without its temple? and what would the temple be without its rites of priestly celebration? If there is to be the temple, there must be *the priesthood*; and the priesthood, not in a mean, sordid, degraded condition, but with all its equipments, and all its observances. And *this* is just what we have in the vision now before us; accompanied,—as in such a case might be anti-

* Stonard, p. 131, note.

cipated, with a glance, similar to that in the preceding vision, to the times of a greater than Joshua :—

Verses 1, 2. “And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” JOSHUA, here and elsewhere mentioned as high priest, is the first in the list of names, given in the book of Ezra, of those who had come up from Babylon under the conduct of Zerubbabel. He is called by Ezra, and by Haggai, “*the son of Josedech*,” who was high priest at the time of the captivity from Jerusalem. He was seen, in vision, by the prophet, “standing before *the angel of the Lord*.” We have seen, in the former visions, who this “angel of the Lord” was,—even the divine “Angel of the Covenant.” That the angel here mentioned is the same, is at once clear from the second verse. Just as, on former occasions, he who is “the angel of the LORD” in the one verse is “the LORD” in the next. And while he is himself Jehovah, he yet speaks in the name of Jehovah, showing clearly the personal distinction in the Godhead. We formerly traced the fact, from the earliest periods of the Scripture history, of the second person of the Godhead—the future Immanuel, having, all along from the beginning, the charge of the entire scheme of preparatory steps for “the fulness of the time.” The part He is represented as acting now, as well as in the previous visions, is altogether appropriate to this representation of his person and office.

“At Joshua’s right hand,” standing “to resist him,” was seen “*Satan*.” You will observe, that on the margin it is said, “*or an adversary*.” But this is not quite correct. It is true that Satan signifies “an adversary;” but in the passage before us, the designation is not thus general. It is not “*an adversary*,” but “*the adversary*.”* It is thus emphatic and definite,—the appropriate designation of some

individual person. And who that individual person is, cannot be doubtful. It is so appropriated as to have become a *proper name.* Not that it is always so used. It is sometimes used without the definite article. This is the case in Psa. cix. 6—"Let *Satan* stand at his right hand;" where it is correctly given on the margin "*an* adversary," and ought to have been so in the text. It corresponds, on the principle of parallelism, to "*a wicked man*" in the former clause of the verse:—"Set thou a wicked man over him; and let an enemy stand at his right hand." "*The* adversary," in the vision before us, is not Sanballat, or any other of the opponents of the Jewish builders, mentioned by Ezra or Nehemiah,—whether personally or as the representative of their foes in general, as some have imagined,—but the great adversary of God and man. It is he whom the Apostle Peter calls, speaking to Christians, "your adversary the devil." It is he who, in the vision of the persecuted church of God, in the book of Revelation, is described as "the great dragon, that old serpent, called the devil and *Satan*;" and over whose fall the voice of triumph is heard in heaven—"Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; for *the accuser of our brethren* is cast down, who accused them before our God day and night."*

This "adversary" is seen "standing at Joshua's *right hand.*" Because it is said to have been the Jewish practice for the accuser, or, as we should call him, the plaintiff, to stand at the right hand of the accused, on occasions of judicial trial, it has by some been conceived that such was the representation in the vision. And this, it is added, is countenanced further by Joshua's being represented as standing himself "*before* the angel of the Lord;" who thus, it is alleged, occupying the tribunal or seat of judgment, appears as judge in the cause between the accuser and the accused. And to this it has by some been added too, that Joshua's appearing, as we afterwards find, "*in filthy garments*" corresponds to the

* Rev. xii. 10.

Roman practice of attiring the accused party, when at the bar, in sordid apparel. But well might we ask—What has a Roman practice, in those ancient times especially, to do in a Jewish vision?—why are the customs of different countries to be thus unnaturally mixed up, to make out a case, which, even with the more plausible addition of Satan being called “the accuser of the brethren,” has not a sufficiency of ground? It is quite true, that to “*stand before the judge*” is the common phrase for the accused person appearing in his presence for trial. It is needless to quote instances; for in truth it is not easy to suppose how any other could be used. It is enough to observe, in reply, that the same phrase is invariably employed to express the functions of the *officiating high priest*; and that it is *the high priest* that is here spoken of. For example:—“At that time, the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to *stand before the Lord* to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day:”*—“My sons, be not now negligent; for the Lord hath chosen you to *stand before him*, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense:”†—“But the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall *stand before me* to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God.”‡—Since it is the high priest, then, that is spoken of, ought we not to consider him as, in the vision, occupying *his official place and posture*? He “stands before *the angel of Jehovah*.” But this angel of Jehovah *is Jehovah*. And, along with the proof of this in the following verse, his very appearing before Him to perform his official functions is a recognition of His divinity. Joshua appears, in connexion with the prospective rebuilding of the city and the temple, and the reoccupancy of the holy place by Jehovah, as about to resume his sacred official duties. And Satan appears, “to resist him;” not by physical force, but

* Deut. x. 8.

† 2 Chron. xxix. 11.

‡ Ezek. xliv. 15.

to oppose him by charges—by giving reasons why he should not, and so prevent what, of course, could not but be mortifying and chagrining to his malignity against both God and His people. The return of the divine favour to them was gall and wormwood to the malevolent and wicked spirit. What he said, or had to say, we are not told. Jehovah knew, and appears to have debarred him from giving it utterance. He could, no doubt, have laid many things to the charge both of the priest personally and of the people whose representative he was. He could have pleaded that they were not yet cured of their spirit of alienation and rebellion,—and have urged their selfish attention to their own accommodation, and their indifference, their tardiness, their reluctance, in setting about the work of the house of God. But what he meant to plead in bar of Joshua's resumption of office,—what ground of opposition he was about to take, it is vain for us to trouble ourselves with conjecturing. Let us notice rather now—

The reception he experienced:—verse 2. "And the LORD said unto Satan, the LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" "*The Lord*" here, as already observed, is evidently the same as "*the Angel of the Lord*"—himself Jehovah, yet speaking in Jehovah's name. There is a passage in the epistle of Jude, which different critics and commentators of eminence interpret as referring to the verse now before us:—"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, (he disputed about the body of Moses,) durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."* The question is, whether the dispute here spoken of between Michael and Satan was a dispute respecting the literal body of Moses, or whether the reference is to the passage before us, and by "the body of Moses" we are to understand *the Jewish Church*, on the same principle on which the Christian church is called "the body of Christ." M'Knight, Stonard, Henderson, all agree in so understanding it. The last-

* Jude 9.

named says—"If the construction put by some eminent commentators upon Jude 9, which resolves 'the body of Moses' there spoken of into the Jewish church, and supposes the apostle to refer to the passage before us, be the true one (*and of this I cannot entertain a doubt*) it will follow," &c. As to "the body of Moses" meaning, as Clarke imagines, the *body of laws* which the people had broken, it is too far-fetched to deserve refutation. Even as to the former view of "the body of Moses" meaning the Jewish Church, I am not without my doubts, though I would not speak positively. I grant the apparent likelihood of the reference being to the passage before us, from the terms of the reprimand to Satan—"The Lord rebuke thee"—being so precisely the same. I would remark, however,—1. That there is nothing at all impossible, or even unnatural, in the supposition of the dispute having been about the literal body of Moses; seeing motives are easily conceivable, such as are quite in harmony with Satan's character, which might prompt the wish to have the body of Moses publicly honoured, and the place of his interment known,—so that he might convert it into a temptation to idolatrous homage, such as the heathen were wont to give to their deified heroes and legislators; well aware of the strength of the propensity among the Jews to the imitation of such pagan practices.—2. Although, when there is a passage in the Old Testament to which another in the New may be naturally interpreted as referring, such interpretation is certainly to be preferred,—yet there was nothing impossible, or even unexampled, in Jude's having received by inspiration the unrecorded fact of the dispute about the dead body of the Jewish Lawgiver, or in his giving the sanction of inspiration to the tradition. We have an exemplification of the same thing a few verses afterwards, in the same epistle, where an unrecorded prophecy of "Enoch the seventh from Adam," of which we never could have heard otherwise, is introduced.—3. "The body of Moses" as a designation of the Jewish Church, is one altogether without a parallel. Not only is the designation itself to be found nowhere else, but nothing at all resembling it. Christ is "the Head of

his body the Church," because there is a spiritual and vital union between him and his believing people, who are the members of that body. But there was no such connexion between the Jewish people and Moses,—no such faith in his name, and no such union effected by that faith,—as at all to warrant the use of the same figure in the one case as in the other. The spiritual Israel indeed were "the body of Christ" even then. And, in addition to this, I notice,—4. Jude's mode of expression respecting the Archangel Michael—"he *durst not* bring against him a railing accusation." *Durst not*—*was not so bold* as to do it—*did not venture* to do it. Our English translation is as literal as any other—*did not dare*.* Now in the passage before us there is very clear evidence,—of which the conclusiveness is admitted even by critics who would have resisted it if they could,—that *Jehovah* is the speaker—the Angel Jehovah. To this divine person, then, if the reference in Jude be to this passage, "*Michael the Archangel*," named by him, must correspond. But who does not at once see and feel that this *cannot be*? Who could use the word "*dared not*" when the reference was to a *divine* speaker? We revolt at the thought. Whatever *incongruity* there might be—and it is admitted to be as great as possible—between the idea of a divine speaker and anything of the nature of a "railing accusation;" yet "*daring*" could not be used of such a speaker without presumption. It can be applied only to a creature. And that a created angel is meant appears further from the parallel passage in 2 Pét. ii. 11, "Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord."

For such reasons, I have my doubts about this question. It is one, however, which does not affect the sense of the vision; and we pass from it,—leaving it with your own judgments.†

* οὐκ ἐτόλμησι.

† Wordsworth, Alford, and others are decidedly in favour of the view to which the author leans, and for which he assigns his reasons. Alford says, "All such explanations" (as those to which the author

There are two grounds on which the rebuke of Satan proceeds—1. *Jehovah's choice of, or delight in, Jerusalem*:—"The Lord that hath chosen (or that delighteth in) Jerusalem rebuke thee!"—Satan knew full well that in the opposition he was offering to Joshua, to prevent his officiating as priest, he was *opposing Jehovah*. Jehovah had returned in loving-kindness to Jerusalem. *He* would have had that loving-kindness kept back, and turned away; and the punishment of their sins continued. He would thus have interdicted the blessing of Jehovah: and, since it was the pleasure of Jehovah he was seeking to hinder, it was appropriate that the rebuke should come *from Him*: "The Lord rebuke thee, Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"—2. The *malice*—the *envious and deadly spite* of the *Devil* stands here in contrast with the *benevolence*—the *relenting forbearance and love*—of *Jehovah*:—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?" The question is to be understood, not of Joshua considered only *personally*, but also of Joshua considered *representatively*—as relating to the rescue of the people as well as himself from oppression, wrong, and, if their enemies had had their will, extinction; and the deliverance and restoration of the very *office* of Joshua—the priestly office, which, without such divine interposition, might have been lost. Satan would have had the brand kept in the fire till it was consumed. But Jehovah's power, and goodness, and faithfulness had plucked it out of the flames,—rescued it from such consumption. And had the arch-adversary the boldness to put himself forward as an accuser, and think to prevail with Jehovah to throw the brand back into the fire? The rebuke is evidently that of indignant supremacy and offended benevolence, directed at once against malignity and presumption.

Verse 3. "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel." Pollution and sordidness of

here refers) "are of course out of the question: and the literal matter of fact alone to be held fast."—ED.

outward attire is a Bible emblem of moral defilement, or sinfulness; while, on the contrary, cleanliness and purity of costume is the type of holiness. And in the present case, the remark made as to the divine deliverance of Joshua, as having reference to the people whose representative he was, as well as to himself personally, is equally applicable to his appearance. His "*filthy garments*" symbolized the iniquity of Israel as well as his own. These garments were, in all likelihood, such soiled and worn-out priestly robes, or portions of them, as might be supposed to have escaped the burning of the temple and been preserved during the captivity. At any rate they appeared in the vision as soiled priestly vestments. The dress did not become the holy presence in which he stood. Divine forbearance, however, does not frown him away; but orders a change:—

Verse 4. "And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." It is the Angel of the Covenant that orders the change. And the language put into His lips is in fine harmony with the view we have taken of His person and character. For, while He gives the order to "those that stood before him,"—that is, to the attendant angels,—mark what he says to Joshua himself: "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment." *I* have done this. Who but Jehovah could "cause iniquity to pass away," either in its charge, its guilt, or its punishment,—or in its personal pollution and defilement? This is God's doing, and God's alone. The "*change of raiment*" was the putting on of new and clean priestly vestments, instead of the old and soiled; and this was to be the sign that his iniquity and that of the people, for which they had been made to suffer, was remitted. The expressions used appear to signify—forgiveness, acceptance, restoration to privilege and honour. God had inflicted punishment on Judah. Their *iniquity* had been the cause. They had been apparently abandoned. Their temple was in

ruins; their city was laid waste; the glory was departed,—the priesthood, the worship of Jehovah in His sanctuary suspended and silenced; no Holy of Holies; no incense, no sacrifice, no priestly blessing. But Jehovah had visited His people in faithfulness, and in pardoning mercy—verifying the character, “Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” * He had even thus dealt with them, restoring priest and people to favour, and honour, and blessing, and fulness of privilege. And who is he who engages to do, and who does, all this? Even He who from the beginning, as we saw on a former occasion, had the management of the entire scheme of preparation for “the fulness of time” committed to him; and who, *at* the fulness of time, was to come and “finish the work” for which all the preparation had been made,—appearing for that purpose, as “God manifest in the flesh.”

But while the priestly vestments are, in the vision, “put on,” the attire is not complete. The “*mitre*,” or turban of pure white linen, with its holy crown, is wanting:—

Verse 5. “And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.” By the slightest imaginable change—the change not of any letter, but of a single vowel point—the “*I said*,” in the beginning of this verse, becomes “*he said*.” The change has the countenance of several versions; and the critics in general give it a decided preference. I hesitate.—In the first place, *Is it necessary?* We have found the prophet in one of the former visions, animated by an eager curiosity, springing from depth of interest in the scenes passing before him, putting in his word,—saying to the angel with the measuring-line—“Whither goest thou?” Is it inconceiv-

* Micah vii. 18, 19.

able, then, that now, delighted to see the high priest thus restored, in his new and clean sacerdotal robes, but missing the priestly head-gear, he should give hasty utterance to his delight by expressing the desire to see the change completed? I do not think it is. And, if I mistake not, there is in the very style of expression some little confirmation of the prophet's being here the speaker. Mark the difference. In the *fourth* verse, the words are—in the form of a direct order—“*Take away* the filthy garments from him.” Following the same style of direct order, we should expect the direction in the *fifth* verse, given, like the former, to “those who stood before him,” “*Set* a fair mitre on his head.” But it is not so. The style is different. It is, “*Let them set* a fair mitre on his head.” This is *not* natural, considered as the utterance of the Angel Jehovah; and it is natural, considered as the utterance of the prophet. But, whether the words were the Angel's or the prophet's, the thing was done. The “mitre,” tiara, or turban, was put upon his head, surmounted probably with its golden crown and inscription of “Holiness unto the LORD.” The sacerdotal attire was thus completed.

It is said here, “And the angel of the Lord *stood by*,” as if the meaning were, that he stood by witnessing the ceremony. But there is no word in the original for “*by*.” It is simply—“And the angel of the Lord *stood*.”* And thus it is rendered by one critic; and by another “*stood up*.” Whichsoever of these two renderings is adopted, I can have no hesitation in considering the words as connected, not with what *precedes*, but with what follows,—as expressing the attitude in which “the angel of the LORD” uttered the solemn protestation to Joshua in the next two verses:—“The angel of the LORD stood, and the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, If thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will also give thee places to walk among these that stand by.” We have here three things

promised, or engaged for;—and the promise made to depend on certain conditions. It matters not which of the two we notice first, we may as well take them as they stand. The conditions stipulated for are these—“If thou shalt *walk in my ways*, and *keep my charge*, or, as it is in the margin, *ordinance*. They are thus two; yet closely connected. We may fairly consider the former as relating to *personal character*, and the latter to *official fidelity*. He was to be found obedient, in personal conduct, to God’s precepts; exemplifying in his own character the sanctity and moral rectitude which it was part of the duty of the priest to inculcate on the people:—“for the priest’s lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” And he was faithfully and punctually to attend to every enjoined function of his priestly commission; keeping all the ordinances, as God had delivered them to Moses.

Such, then, without entering into detail, were the required conditions. What, then, depended on the conditions? *Three things*:—1. Thou shalt “*judge my house*.” The word “*house*” here, you will at once perceive, means, not *temple*, but *household*. “The house of Jacob” is a designation of Israel; and they were regarded, and are repeatedly spoken of under the image of the household or family of Jehovah: “I am a Father to Israel.” To “*judge his house*,” then, is the same thing as to “*rule his people*.” This, you may naturally think, did not properly pertain to the priesthood. It is remarkable, however, that thus it was to turn out, and did turn out, in regard to the priestly lineage in the family of Joshua. It was not so in the person of Joshua himself; but after Nehemiah’s death, a large portion of the management of the civil affairs of Judea was committed by the Syrian prefects into the hands of the high priest; and it was still more fully realized in the time of the Maccabean high priests, in whom the civil and the sacred were eminently united. And it may be remarked, in passing, that it was when these princely priests failed in the conditions here specified, that, in the arrangements of providence,

the glory departed.—2. Thou “shalt also *keep my courts.*” Of this the meaning cannot be mistaken. He was to continue to have the charge of God’s house, and to minister in the holy place, and superintend the entire system of the sacerdotal and Levitical services. His continuance in this high and honourable office,—that is, in the way of succession in his lineage, was to depend on the conditions specified, of personal obedience and official fidelity. It is quite the same style of conditionality with that in which the engagements of Jehovah to Israel generally, when he took them into covenant, are couched: “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”*—3. “I will give thee *places to walk among these that stand by.*” By “these that stand by” we suppose to be meant the *attendant angels*. The great difficulty here is with the word rendered “*places to walk*”—on the margin, “*walks.*” The original word is one which is ambiguous in some degree. But from the conjugation of the verb to which, as a participle, it belongs, we are disposed to acquiesce in the judgment of a modern critic who makes it to signify, neither walks nor walkers, but those who guide or conduct in walking:—“I will give thee ministering guides among these that stand by.”† And no sense can correspond better than this with all that we learn, from the entire previous history of the Jewish people, from the calling of Abraham onwards, respecting the *ministration of angels*. It is a promise, then, of the aid and direction of the hosts that surround the divine throne, the “ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation.” If the rendering “*walks,*” or “*places to walk*” be retained (though we

* Exod. xix. 5, 6.

† מהלכים is the Hiphil participle from הלך. It must therefore signify *those who cause to go or walk, leaders, conductors, guides.*” (Henderson.) Still, high authorities, as Rosenmüller, Ewald and others, favour the rendering of our authorised version, taking the word as the plural of מהלך, a *walk*.—ED.

feel doubtful if it can) then the promise will be a higher one still,—that, namely, of a final association with angelic spirits in heaven.

We are never, in Scripture, allowed to forget, that the whole glory of the sacerdotal institutions of the ancient economy arose from their *typical import*—their being “*shadows of good things to come.*” In such a connexion as this, it is almost natural to anticipate a prospective reference to the coming Messiah. We had it in last vision. We have it even more clearly in this, in the verses which follow:—“Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant The BRANCH. For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree.” Mark the speaker. It is not directly “the Angel of the Lord” himself, but Jehovah the Father by him:—for the words in the beginning of verse seventh continue to apply to *all* that follows, to the end. Observe then—

1. The very reason I have assigned for expecting the introduction of Messiah here,—namely the symbolical or typical character of persons, offices, and things, under the old dispensation,—is actually stated in the first of these verses. It is said of “Joshua and his fellows that sat before him;” that is, whose ordinary place this was,—his ordinary attendants—the inferior priests, who ministered officially to the high priest, waiting before him for his orders,—“they are *men wondered at.*” The marginal reading (which you need not to be informed is of the same authority with that in the text) is—“*men of wonder, or sign.*”* The meaning then, we take to be, they are *sign-men*; that is, symbolical “*typical men.*” Joshua himself is obviously to be here included.

* אנשי מופת.

Joshua, as *high priest*, we take to have been, like all who held the same high office, from Aaron downward, the type of "the great" and only "High Priest of our profession," under the *new* economy, "Christ Jesus." And "his fellows," the inferior priesthood—why should we not regard *them* as types of believers in general in the Gospel age;—who, while all formal and official priesthood but that of Christ is for ever set aside,—are yet called "a royal priesthood," being made at once "kings and priests unto God," and who are said as "a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."—2. This sense of "men of sign" as meaning *typical persons*, accords well with what follows:—"for behold I will bring forth"—bring forward—introduce—"my servant the Branch." Who speaks? Observe again; it is not the Angel of the Lord directly—for *He* was himself "the Branch"—but the Jehovah of hosts in whose name he makes the announcement. It is *He* that says, "I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH." I have already assumed who is meant by "*my servant the Branch*." It seems absurd to make it Zerubbabel; for it is evidently a person *yet to come*; whereas Zerubbabel had been the conductor of the first returning captives from Babylon; was there, and at his post: and *to him* we shall hereafter find the word of Jehovah addressed, both in the following chapter and in the sixth.* Moreover, "THE BRANCH" is a title by which, beyond all controversy, the Messiah is distinguished elsewhere. Just look at one or two passages, in which the reference is beyond a doubt:—"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel." "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in

* "The author of the Targum admits that by the *Branch* the Messiah is meant. The same interpretation is found in other Jewish authorities, as both Kimchi and Rashi admit."—ED.

the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.**”* And when he is called, so emphatically, “*My servant* the Branch,”—the designation becomes one of still more marked individuality and eminence. “*My servant*,” even by itself, marks out the Messiah, as, among the many servants of God, standing alone, in unrivalled distinction: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth”—is language which would lead us to think as if no one that merited the title had gone before, and no one was ever to follow:—“**BEHOLD MY SERVANT!**” His was to be the most signal and glorious service ever rendered; a service to which no one in the universe of being was competent but himself. “And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.”† Such were the prophecies that went before, respecting Him, of whom, after his coming and work it is said—“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.‡”

3. Observe the *deep interest of Jehovah, and his ever wakeful and watchful care* over the work going on, and over that too, and specially, which it typified:—“For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua: *upon one stone* (shall be) *seven eyes.*” The stone “laid before,” or in the presence of, Joshua, *must* mean the foundation stone of the second temple. The foundation had been laid,—and laid “*before Joshua.*” He is expressly named more than once in the account of the ceremony: but must it be that stone only? *Can* no other be included? “I cannot imagine,” says an

* Isa. xi. 1; iv. 2; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

† See too Isa. l. 10; lii. 13.

‡ Phil. ii. 6—8.

excellent and thoroughly evangelical critic, "*any other* stone to be intended here than the foundation-stone of the temple, which had been laid by Zerubbabel in the presence of Joshua and his brethren the priests, who celebrated the joyful event in songs of praise to Jehovah."* We are tempted to ask—*not even typically?* If the men were men of sign, why not the stone a *stone of sign*?—a *typical stone*? That a *stone* is one of the figurative and prophetic designations of the Messiah is without a doubt. Even so early as the days of Jacob, he is announced as "the Shepherd, *the Stone of Israel*."† So far from thinking that *no other* stone is referred to than the foundation-stone laid by Zerubbabel, we are disposed to be of opinion that the second stone—the "chief corner-stone" in the foundation of the spiritual temple, is *more* meant in the terms which follow, than even that stone that had been "laid before Joshua." At all events, what is said of the Type is pre-eminently true of the Antitype:—"Upon one stone (shall be) *seven eyes*." The eye is the natural hieroglyphic for *knowledge*; and *seven*, as every reader of the Bible is aware, is the number used to denote *completeness, perfection*. "*Seven eyes*" denote the perfection of observant knowledge: and as "the eyes of Jehovah" mean Jehovah's observation and knowledge, His "seven eyes" express the perfection of both—omniscient observation. Of the "seven eyes" in the passage before us, we have the explanation expressly given in the following chapter:—"For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth."‡ The word "*with*" is supplementary. It spoils the sense. The verse contains two sentences. The one ends with Zerubbabel; and the other is the ex-

* Henderson. The expression "laid before Joshua" is the ground of his objection to regard the stone as referring to the Messiah.—ED.

† Comp. Psal. cxviii. 22. with Matt. xxi. 42, and Acts iv. 11:—and Isa. xxviii. 16. with 1 Pet. ii. 6.

‡ Chap. iv. 10.

planation, finely introduced, as we shall hereafter see, of the "seven eyes" in the vision before us: "Those seven—they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth."

From the connexion of the immediately following words—"Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof,"—with these—"upon one stone seven eyes,"—we are very naturally led to think of the eyes as graven on the stone. There is not the slightest reason to conceive of any such engraving having been upon the foundation-stone of the temple:—and they who repudiate the notion of the graving being that of hieroglyphic eyes are constrained to satisfy themselves with—"it is not said *what* the graving was to be." I am strongly inclined to think, that when Jehovah here says, "For behold the stone which I have laid before Joshua," (although I am far from objecting to the seven eyes meaning the observant and interested regard of Jehovah as fixed even upon *that* stone, as the encouragement of the builders and the worshippers of that day,) He then passes, in the principal intention of his words, to *another* stone,—even to the stone which, "in the fulness of time," He himself was to "lay in Zion," for the foundation of the hopes of sinners; and for the foundation of the New Testament church, the spiritual temple, composed of "living stones" laid on that foundation by the grace of the great Master-Builder:—of which more on the following chapter. The language is future—"I will engrave the graving," or the sculpture, "thereof." And, as the *stone* is a figure, so is the graving. I do think the graving is that of the hieroglyphic eyes. And the hieroglyphic may perhaps convey a *twofold* meaning. The first, I should say, *certainly*: that the eyes of Jehovah should be continually upon it, with intense and delighted interest; and upon the glorious spiritual structure that was to rest upon it, marking its progressive advancement to its final completion. The idea is the same (though more strongly conveyed, both by the number seven, and by the graving of the eyes upon the stone) with that which is expressed respecting the land of Canaan: "The eyes of the Lord thy

God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.”—The second is one which I mention with hesitation, because I am not sure about the propriety of assigning two meanings to one hieroglyphic. I cannot, however, forget, that the stone represents a person, and that that person is divine. JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF is this “chief corner stone.” May not the graving of the hieroglyphic seven eyes upon the stone, then, convey the additional idea of the DEITY of Him whom the stone represented,—as himself the possessor of divine omniscience; who could say—“All the churches shall know, that I am He that searcheth the reins and the hearts?”

Looking still to the future, Jehovah adds—“And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.” That the word “*iniquity*” does sometimes, by a sufficiently natural figure, or association, stand for the *punishment* which iniquity brings upon the transgressor, need not be questioned. I cannot, however, (fond as I am of keeping to the present time when the present time is the subject,) go in with those who translate it *punishment* here, and confine the meaning to the removal of the punishment which for seventy years had been inflicted on the Jewish people. For in truth, *the present* is *not* here the subject. Jehovah has passed on to the future,—to the mission of “his Servant the Branch;” and to the results of that mission,—the laying of the foundation of a more glorious temple than that of Solomon or Zerubbabel; and the laying of it (as the clause now before us indicates) in a work which was to expiate iniquity—to “take away sin.” The “*one day*” in which that was to be effected, we cannot but regard as the day when Messiah finished his work, when Jehovah “laid on him the iniquity of us all,” and for all that iniquity he made the atonement, by “offering up himself.” “The iniquity of *that land*” refers of course to the land of Palestine. The work of the Messiah had a primary respect to Israel. The offer of the salvation was “to the Jew first:”—“Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” These words of

Peter to the Jews of his day, are a commentary on those before us. The iniquity of "that land" was multiform and aggravated; but an atonement should be made in "that day" infinitely more than sufficient to take it all away. And then follows, under another figure, the *peace* thence resulting:—verse 10. "In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig-tree." I cannot but regard it as quite too limited a view of the meaning of these words to say—"A promise of the tranquillity and social enjoyment that were to be experienced by the restored Hebrews." But is not the whole of this latter part of the vision *future*? Is not the very phrase "in that day" frequently and emphatically future? And has it not most commonly a pointed reference to the "fulness of the time?" It has; and *here*, we presume, amongst other places. We consider the words as referring to the PEACE OF THE GOSPEL. That it is a figure for a state of repose, peace, security, personal and social, many passages might, were it at all necessary, be cited to show. One passage only I now quote, because it has so clear a reference to the same period,—to the same *kind*, and the same *cause*, of peace:—"But they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it."* It is true, the reference here is to the "latter days." But the peaceful influence of the Gospel was felt and manifested from the first. It was felt individually, in the soul of each subject of it; and it was felt socially in the intercourse of all. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Jew dwelt in peace with fellow-Jew; and even Gentiles were numbered among neighbours and brethren, who before were aliens and outcasts, "hated with a perfect hatred." The proclamation of the Gospel was to be, "Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is nigh:"—and the corresponding effect of it was—"He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of parti-

* Micah iv. 4.

tion between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain, one new man, so making peace.”*

I must now close with one or two practical observations.—

1. “Consider the high priest of our profession.” What a contrast between him and “every priest taken from among men!” His character and his work are alike perfect;—no defect in the one, no flaw in the other. When he stood before Jehovah, and said, “Lo I come, to do thy will, O God:”—and when, having done that will, He entered into the Most Holy place, and again stood before God, presenting the blood of his own sacrifice, and making intercession,—the eye of divine omniscience, from first to last could see no spot or blemish, in person, character, or work. There was no “change of raiment needed there.” All was taintless purity. “Such an high priest became us, who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” *Satan* could bring no charges against him; but fain would he have prevented his fulfilling the purpose for which He had assumed his official character. He tried it by temptation, at the outset, in the progress, and at the close of his work. But “when the prince of this world came, he found nothing in Him.” This is our comfort, and our hope,—the sinless purity of his character, and the perfection, and divine acceptance of his priestly work.

2. Of every converted and saved sinner it may with emphatic truth be said—“Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?” Every such sinner owes his rescue from destruction to the interposition of sovereign grace. And the grace that has delivered must keep him. He is ever, while in this world, in danger. *Satan*, having failed with the Master tries to secure his followers. He tempts them to all manner of evil. He tempts them to presumption; and he tempts them to despondency. Tries them at one time to draw from Christ, and at another to drive them. And, were they left to themselves, the issue would infallibly be fatal. But He who withstood his own temptations helps them in theirs. *Satan*

* Eph. ii. 14, 15.

would have them back whence they have been delivered: he would insure their perdition. But the divine "Angel of the Covenant" is ever with them; and He will "bruise Satan under their feet shortly."

3. We stand before God in our sinfulness and pollution: and the God before whom we stand is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, neither can he look upon sin." What, then, is to become of us? Must not God turn away from us with indignant loathing? Must He not banish us from his presence? Were He to regard us *as we are*, and to treat us *as we deserve*, He must. There could be but one doom for us. But God "delighteth in mercy." He hath provided for us a change of raiment. The garment of his Son's righteousness is ready for us, instead of the "filthy raiment" of our own. And, at the same time, the white robe of personal holiness. The one Christ provides; the other, his Spirit;—and thus we are fitted for standing before God, and ministering in His presence. Even now we appear before Him, having our iniquity covered by the one; and, though the other is still sadly imperfect in purity, those imperfections are concealed from the eye of divine Justice; and in due time, it shall be "without spot before the throne of God." And we owe our present acceptance,—our holiness so far as attained, and our hopes of heavenly perfection, to the work of that "ONE DAY," in which iniquity was removed by the divinely provided expiation,—not the iniquity of "that land" alone, but of the whole world. And hence—

4. Let sinners remember,—There is but *one foundation* for their hopes; one ground alone on which they can now draw near to God, or on which they can finally stand before him. It is the "ONE STONE,"—the "tried stone, the precious corner stone,"—the stone on which are graven the seven eyes,—itself divine, and the object of the Father's approving delight. Build there; and all is safe,—safe now,—safe for death,—safe for judgment,—safe for eternity. *This foundation* is laid by the God with whom you have to do:—it is therefore at once *a sure* and *the only sure* foundation.

LECTURE V.

ZECH. IV.

“ And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps which are upon the top thereof: and two olive-trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts. Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it. Moreover, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth. Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick, and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive-branches, which, through the two golden pipes, empty the golden oil out of themselves? And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.”

It is needful to keep in mind that all these successive scenes were presented to the mind of the Prophet in vision; and that each vision was distinct, forming a whole of itself, independently of the scenery of those which preceded it, al-

though not so as to preclude connexion in the lessons taught, and occasional reference (such as we shall find in the one now before us) to the earlier in the later. The fourth in the series of visions, then, was now closed: and at the close of it, the Prophet represents himself as having fallen into a kind of reverie arising from its disclosures, or from some particular part of them, by which his mind was absorbed, and unconscious of aught that might be passing around him. From this state he was roused, as the first verse indicates, by the touch and the voice of the ministering angel, and his attention arrested to a new scenic representation, and the explanation of its meaning.

Our plan in this Lecture will be—*first* to take a brief survey of the different parts of the vision with their general import; and then, *secondly*, to deduce, with a somewhat fuller illustration, some of its principal lessons.

The first thing which presented itself to the prophet's entranced view was "*a candlestick*," or *candelabra*, "*all of gold*." The structure of this candlestick evidently differed from that in the tabernacle and temple, of which a minute description is given in the close of the twenty-fifth chapter of the book of Exodus. In that candlestick, there were three branches projecting from either side, and all in the same line. Each of these had its lamp, or light, while the seventh light occupied the centre. In that of Zechariah's vision, the centre, or top of the shaft, is occupied by the "*bowl*," or oil-vessel. There could not, therefore, be a light there; the more especially as there was a pipe, or tube, from the oil-vessel to each of the lights. Some critics have puzzled their ingenuity to a degree absolutely ludicrous about the disposition of these "*seven lamps*" and their respective "*pipes*" or tubes. Their perplexity has arisen from an assumption, that the order of the lamps must have been the same with that of those in the candlestick of the sanctuary. But for this there is no ground. The same symbol may have different forms. In the vision of John, in the beginning of Revelation, there is no certainty at least that the "*seven golden candlesticks*," representing the seven Asiatic churches, were united by con-

nexion with a common centre at all. It appears to me clear, in the present instance, that the seven lamps were, in regular order, *round* the central bowl; while from that bowl there proceeded one of the pipes or tubes to each lamp. In the Hebrew, indeed, when the "*pipes*" are spoken of, the phraseology is peculiar,—not simply "seven," but "*seven and seven*." This too has given occasion for not a little verbal criticism:—some multiplying the one seven into the other, and making forty-nine; others doubling the seven, and making fourteen;* and assuredly it is not impossible, that in order to convey the idea of the copiousness of the supply of oil, *two* pipes might be represented as going to *each* of the lamps. Others conceive the second of the two *sevens* to have been an interpolation†—accidental or intentional,—and the Prophet to have written simply *seven*. And they support this by the fact, that both in the Vulgate Latin and in the Septuagint Greek, the reading is thus simple. The probability is, that there were seven lamps, with an oil-pipe to each. On either side of this golden candelabra there grew an *olive tree*:—and the "two olive-trees" without the intervention of any human preparation, skill, or labour, distilled spontaneously into the central reservoir the oil-olive for the lights.

Eager to know the meaning of the symbol, the Prophet, addressing the interpreting Angel with the respect due to a superior, puts the question, "What are these, my lord?" The Angel, apparently in the style of *surprise*, and thus of gentle reproof, asks in return, "Knowest thou not what these be?"—implying that he *might* and *ought* to have known; the question bearing resemblance to that of Jesus to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"—or that to his disciples, "Know ye not this parable? and how, then, shall ye know all parables?"—The Prophet, however, will pretend to no knowledge which he does not possess. He at once owns his ignorance—"No, my lord." Let us imitate the twofold example; both that of

* So Stonard; defending it from Gen. vii. 2, 3; 1 Kings viii. 65.—
Ed.

† So Dr. Henderson, very decidedly.

inquisitiveness, and that of *ingenuousness*. Let us be on the alert in our inquiries after knowledge; and in order to our acquiring it, never foolishly, and to save our pride or vanity, affect to have what we have not.

The answer is not, in the meanwhile, fully given; but is reserved till the close of the vision, when the question is again repeated and pressed. A general *key*, however, to the meaning is immediately supplied:—"Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts." This message, which the Prophet was to convey to Zerubbabel for his encouragement, evidently contains the grand lesson of the vision:—the lesson, namely, that it was not by the power and might of man, but by the supply of the Spirit of God, that the Church of God was to thrive, or the cause of God to prosper and triumph. The words "*might*" and "*power*," or their corresponding words in the original, are not materially different in meaning; but, by an idiom common to all languages, more terms than one are used, to convey the idea of "*might*" or "*power*" of whatever description or in whatever amount;—physical power, mental power, moral power, as swayed by man; or power of all these kinds exerted individually or by combined numbers. The *candlestick*, with its "*lamps*," is a symbol which seems, by the use of it in Scripture, appropriated to THE CHURCH; not the Old Testament church, nor the New Testament church, exclusively, but the true Church of God in all ages, and under all dispensations. As it is only by the supply of oil that the lights of the candlestick can be kept burning, so is it only by the supply of the Spirit that the Church can retain its spiritual light, and impart it to the world around.

And it is in connexion with this all-important sentiment, that, in verse seventh, the further assurance is given to Zerubbabel of all difficulties, even the greatest, giving way before him:—"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." I

have hinted at what appears the obvious and natural meaning of the figure here used. A "*mountain*" in the way, represents an obstacle apparently insuperable. Thus Zerubbabel might be tempted to think of the magnitude of the work before him, connected with the comparative smallness and feebleness of the agency and means of effecting it, and the formidable character and degree of the opposition to it. But if, instead of looking despondingly at his human means and agency, he looked to, and trusted in, the almighty and all-subduing energy of the divine Spirit, he would find every difficulty vanish; the weakest power omnipotent, when God himself was with him. The levelling of mountains and hills is a figure used elsewhere, as well as here, for the overcoming and smoothing down of varied obstructions, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."*

In the latter part of this verse, an eminent modern critic† understands "the head-stone" (translating it "*the chief stone*") as meaning the chief stone *of the foundation*: and the pronoun "*he*" as meaning, not Zerubbabel, but JEHOVAH. "*Thereof*" being supplementary, he understands the words as not referring *at all* to the temple then in building, but as looking beyond it altogether, and having exclusive reference to the great spiritual temple,—the *Christian church*, as in due time to be *founded* by *Jehovah*; who, for this purpose, was to bring forth to view His chosen Messiah, who was to be "laid in Zion" as "the stone, the proved stone, the precious corner-stone, the sure foundation." I cannot but think this forced and unnatural. The *founding* had been introduced in the preceding vision; and the *stone* of the foundation described in such terms as constrained

* Isa. xl. 3—5.

† Dr. Henderson.—Ed.

us to understand it, not literally merely, but symbolically, as relating to the spiritual building, as well as to its type, the temple. In the vision before us, it is the progress and completion of the work that is the special subject. I am satisfied, therefore, that our translators were right in understanding the stone that was to be brought out with the acclamations of "Grace, grace, unto it" as meaning the "*head-stone*," and as having reference to the *finishing of the structure*. That in this view of the words, they have a typical as well as a literal—a prospective as well as an immediate import, I have no more doubt than I have regarding the *foundation* in the former vision. More of this, however, by and by. The words in the seventh verse, "*He shall bring forth the head-stone thereof*," I understand as substantially the same in meaning with those which follow in the ninth verse, "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; *his hands shall also finish it*." This was a divine assurance, as the eighth verse affirms: "*Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me*." And the fulfilment of the assurance was to be the evidence of the divine commission of the Prophet; or rather, perhaps, of Him by whom the communication was made. I have said "*rather perhaps*," because in the words, "*Thou shalt know*," the Prophet himself is addressed. If therefore, as in former instances, the divine "Angel of the Covenant" is considered as making the communication to him, then the words "*Thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you*," will have reference to the divinity of *His own* commission,—His commission *then*, in anticipation of His commission in "the fulness of time."

How little soever had as yet been effected, Zerubbabel and Joshua, and the builders under their superintendence, should find all their desponding apprehensions joyfully disappointed. The slender beginnings should have a great and successful ending:—verse 10. "For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth."

There is a reference in these words (as in last lecture I took occasion to notice) to a particular in the previous vision. I observed that the preposition "*with*"—"with those seven," is supplementary; and that the sense it gives (if sense it should be called) is a very harsh and revolting one,—placing the seven eyes of the divine omniscience, along with the plummet, "*in the hands of Zerubbabel.*" I stated that the verse should consist of two sentences, in addition to the question with which it commences:—"for they shall rejoice when they shall see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel. Those seven" (namely the seven eyes on the stone in the former vision)—"they are the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth." Another rendering, indeed, is given in the margin—"Those seven eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth, shall rejoice, when they shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel." And this construction the critic before referred to pronounces "*the only tenable one.*" That it is tenable, and more than tenable, we grant. That it is the *only* tenable one, we more than question. And that, in the connexion, it is the most natural and suitable, we are further still from admitting. The latter part of the verse is an answer to the question in the beginning of it. That question, being addressed to the children of the captivity themselves, implies, and was evidently meant to imply, that there were some, not among their enemies merely, but *among themselves*, that thought lightly, despondingly, and even slightly and scornfully, of the slender, inauspicious, and unpromising, commencements of the great undertaking, and were disposed to smile, with a feeling that approached to derision, at the confidence of others. Now, it is of all by whom "the day of small things" was thus lightly esteemed, that the words, we think, are to be understood—"for *they* shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hands of Zerubbabel"—adjusting the erect position of the walls, as they rise, contrary to all their anticipations, toward their completion. All their derisive and discouraging fears should be changed to wondering joy.

Then follows the *cause* of this:—"Those seven; they are the eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth." The meaning is plain. Those eyes were upon the foundation stone. It was laid, that is, under divine auspices. "The eyes of Jehovah" being upon it implies that all the perfections of the divine character were engaged and pledged for the completion of the structure: for they were upon it, with approving sanction; and He who looked approvingly on the laying of the foundation would not desert the rearing of the superstructure, but watch it till the bringing out of "the head-stone,"—till the finishing touch.

The Prophet had not yet obtained an explicit answer to his inquiry about the "*two olive-trees*" on the two sides of the candlestick. He repeats it:—verses 11, 12. "Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive-trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof? And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?" Retaining the translation in the text of the latter part of the twelfth verse in preference to that given in the margin,* I need hardly remark that the epithet "*golden*," when applied to the oil, signifies simply the richness of its colour. After a question and an answer the same as before, we have the reply to the inquiry in the verses which follow:—"And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth."

Commentators are not a little divided as to who or what are to be understood by the "*two anointed ones*"—a sufficiently correct translation, we presume, of the peculiarly idiomatic Hebrew designation "*sons of oil*." It may be well at once to take another passage along with us, to aid us in our interpretation of this;—a passage in which there is universally understood to be an allusion to this of Zechariah.

* Namely, "*empty out of themselves oil into the gold*."—ED.

I refer to Rev. xi. 4. "These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth."

The passage in the Prophet has by some been explained of the two Dispensations—the old and the new; or of MOSES and CHRIST, as respectively the representatives of the one and of the other:* and those who adopt this explanation consider the passage in Revelation as having the same reference—regarding the "two witnesses" as the Old and New Testaments. By some, again, it has been explained very far-fetchedly and incongruously, of the *two natures of Christ*,—a sense which neither the one passage nor the other will at all bear: and by others of Christ, in his *priestly* and his *kingly* offices. I was for a time much inclined to think that to apply the designation of "the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord of the whole earth" to Joshua and Zerubbabel, was rather too high an honour. But, without now assigning my reasons for this thought, and the view which had pressed itself upon my mind, somewhat different from any I have mentioned, it is better for me to say at once that I acquiesce in the more ordinary reference of the Angel's explanation to these two great agents as selected and employed by Jehovah as His servants in this entire transaction; not, however, in their own persons merely, but in their *official characters*, as representatives of the servants of God in His church, and in the promotion of His cause under both Dispensations. I am confirmed in this interpretation by these considerations:—1. It is not *recondite*, and *difficult of apprehension*:—and the questions of the interpreting angel seem to imply that the Prophet should not have been so much at a loss for the meaning.—2. It suits well the description of them as "*standing by the Lord of the whole earth*;" that is, as servants waiting His orders,—to witness for him,—to bear his messages,—or, in any way to execute his work, and advance his glory.—3. This very representation of them implies, that, when they are compared to olive-trees, furnishing oil to the lights of the candlestick,

* So Blayney: Stonard adopts the same.—ED.

—that is, conveying spiritual influence to the Church of God, it is not as *producers*, but as *dispensers*,—being in suberviency to “the Lord of the whole earth,” from whom all originates; by whom the olive-trees are made to grow, and are themselves supplied with the oil which they impart,—fitted for the purpose they thus serve. Thus it is with the ministers of God’s sanctuary. God supplies them with all the grace they possess. And as, in the vision, the oil from the olive-trees passes through the golden tubes to the lamps; so from them, through the ordinances of divine institution, the gracious influence of the truth and Spirit of God comes upon, and is maintained in, the Church.—4. In no other way can I find a satisfactory principle of harmony between the text before us and that quoted from the Book of Revelation. When on that passage, we endeavoured to show, that the only interpretation of the “*two witnesses*” was the most common one; that which makes the meaning simply *a competent number* of faithful witnesses for God and his Christ amidst prevailing spiritual darkness and death.* “The *olive-trees* and the *candlesticks* of Zechariah,” says Fuller on the verse in Revelation, “to which there is a manifest reference, *were not the same*. The former supplied the latter, or the two sides of the bowl of it, with oil. The candlestick seems to have signified the church; and the olive-trees the prophets of God who were with the builders helping them.† Corresponding with this, the olive-trees of John are faithful ministers, and the candlesticks Christian churches. The same prophesying” (the word used respecting the two witnesses,—a word which includes all spiritual teaching) “which bears witness against the corruptions of Antichrist, supplies the friends of Christ with fresh oil, and enables them to ‘shine as lights in the world.’ Both the olive-trees and the candlesticks, in different ways, are witnesses for the truth.” The only observation we would offer on this statement is—

* There is a complete series of unpublished Lectures by the Author, on the Book of Revelation. It is to a discussion in one of these that allusion is here made.—ED.

† Ezra v. 2.

that when the writer speaks of the "olive-trees" representing "*the prophets* of God who were with the builders helping them," he surely ought to have specially included the two principal servants of God whom we have named, and whom the prophets are said to have helped. The "two olive-trees" we consider as having represented *them principally*, if not exclusively. The prophets, however, may with propriety be taken along with them: "Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them."* We would only further remark here, that "the Lord of the whole earth" is a designation which, though it from the beginning belonged to God as Creator, and in that capacity Lord, not of the earth alone, but of the universe, yet seems to be given in anticipation of Gospel times, and to belong specially to the LORD MESSIAH; to whom "the heathen were to be given for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession,"—who was to be "Lord of all"—not of the Jews only, but of "all kindreds and peoples and nations and tongues."

I must now call your attention to some of the leading lessons of the passage.

1. *First*, then:—let us bear in mind God's purpose in the institution of His Church on earth, and our corresponding duties, as members and ministers of that Church. All interpreters seem to be of one mind in regarding the *candlestick* as the symbol of the Church. And assuming this to be right, there can be no hesitation about the divine design. Who frames a candlestick, with its branches, its lamps, its oil vessel, and all the means of its supply, for any other purpose than that of *giving light*? The Church of God is thus constituted by Him to be "the light of the world." The world is spiritually dark. The light of truth—the light of life—is in the Church,—and there alone. By the Church I mean the true spiritual Israel. Individually and collec-

* Ezra v. 2.

tively, they are lights; lights for the diffusion of knowledge, holiness, and joy. Let us see to it, then, brethren, that, individually and collectively, *we* be answering this end, and answering it effectually. The *Jewish* church was set down as a light amid the darkness of surrounding heathenism. If that people, under the influence of selfish pride, kept their light to themselves—"placing it under a bushel," instead of seeking its diffusion for Jehovah's glory and the benefit of ignorant and perishing men,—we cannot but think they took a false view of their special privileges, and thus failed, in one respect at least, of fulfilling the divine design in their bestowment. And thus, beyond all question, ought the New Testament church to be a centre of diffusion; regarding itself as enlightened, that it may shine; as blessed, that it may be a blessing. In proportion as, at home and abroad, we assist in spreading light—the light of God, the light of saving, and sanctifying, and joy-diffusing truth—we are fulfilling God's purpose in our own illumination. In proportion as we are failing in this, we are failing in the very end for which he has "given us light," and are incurring His displeasure. And O! if it be the part of a faithful ministry to be the medium of the communication, by their instructions and admonitions, of divine influence to the churches, so that they may shine with a pure, and steady, and extending light,—*we* should feel, and all the ministers of the word and pastors of the churches should feel, the weight of responsibility that attaches to the charge. It is in proportion as the oil supplied is pure and copious, that you will enjoy the light among yourselves, and extend the joy of it around you.

2. The next great general lesson is, the assurance we may enjoy of the complete fulfilment of every purpose and promise of God. The subject of His purposes and promises brought before us in this chapter, is the growth to its full perfection, in height, and symmetry, and glory—not of the ancient temple at Jerusalem merely, but of the spiritual temple—the temple of "living stones," built on Christ, the living and everlasting foundation. The whole vision was intended for the encouragement of the builders and their

leaders at the time. There were, as we have seen, circumstances that were disheartening,—calculated to make them sigh and desist, sinking their spirits and paralyzing their hands. Their number was comparatively small. The work to be done, when regarded in proportion to their number and their means, was great. They were in the midst too of *enemies*,—powerful, numerous, artful, and malignant. The derision of these enemies, and their efforts, sometimes too successful, to interrupt and thwart them, made their case appear in their eyes at times as hopeless. And the unbelieving doubts of many among themselves were infectious and spreading; so that their very leaders were in danger of fainting. The whole drift of this chapter might be summed up in the words of Jesus to his disciples—“**HAVE FAITH IN GOD!**” And the encouragement that was held out to the Jewish builders, is held out to us. We are warranted to take it, in its fullest amount, in regard to the building up of God’s “spiritual house.” Zerubbabel, the Jewish builder, was a typical representative of Christ; to whom, as the great Architect of that spiritual structure, the promise in the ninth verse must be considered as ultimately referring—“The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundations of this house; his hands shall also finish it.” We shall see this more fully and pointedly brought out in a future vision: “Speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is the **BRANCH**; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the **LORD**: even he shall build the temple of the **LORD**; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.” * As surely as the typical Zerubbabel finished the typical temple, so surely shall the typified finish His. And surely if the “shoutings of Grace, grace unto it!” were appropriate at the completion of the one, still more emphatically so must they be at the completion of the other. The

* Chap. vi. 12, 13.

first stone and the last must owe alike to grace their life as "living stones," and their position in the "living temple." And the plaudits of men and angels, amidst which the building shall be completed, will be in harmony with the character of its progress from beginning to end. GRACE shall be their theme.

It is true, that in the one case, as in the other, *human agency* is employed; and in the one case *much more* than in the other, looking at that agency and at the nature and extent of the work, do we see reason for despondency and desperation; especially when to the nature of the work is added the nature and the amount of the hostile opposition it is fated to encounter. No created agency, indeed, could succeed in the attempt to add a single living stone to the building. As soon could such agency put life into the stones of the field or of the quarry. What, then, are our securities? What our encouragements? Let an answer to this question be—

3. Our *third* and last topic. We have *first of all*, what should ever be enough to inspire confidence, though it stood alone,—independent of all information as to the way in which the work was to be effected by Him,—we have *the express and explicit promise of Jehovah*, that the building shall be finished, and that before the efforts of His people, put forth in obedience to His will, and with prayer for His blessing, the greatest—the most apparently insurmountable—obstacles shall give way.* How feeble soever the power of those employed in the work, yet, with Jehovah on their side, "the mountains would flow down at his presence," and what seemed insuperable become level ground. Such an assurance ought of itself to be enough. We may well rest assured, that if God be with us, no created power can prevent success. "GOD WILL WORK, AND WHO SHALL LET IT?" If HE bids us labour, and promises success, *let us labour, and trust Him*, even though he give us not another word on which to rest, beyond a *bare engagement*. "Hath

* Verses 7, 9, 10.

he said, and shall he not do? hath he spoken, and will he not make it good?" He *will* "make it good." It is ours to obey; to do duty; and leave the result in His hands.

But we *have* something more here on which to rest than the bare word of promise:—we have the assurance of *the incessantly attentive superintendence and watchful care of His ever-present providence*. This, we are satisfied, is the true interpretation of the mystic terms of the tenth verse, as before explained.* The "seven eyes of the Lord" "run to and fro through the whole earth;" so that nothing can anywhere happen unanticipated and unseen, and take him by surprise. The work, then, cannot fail to prosper. In what part soever of the earth it may be going forward, His eye is there, watching over and guiding it. And who can either elude omniscience, or resist omnipotence? The divine eye is ever in union with the divine arm; the *knowledge* of God with his *power*. Mere knowledge, unless thus associated, would be utterly inefficient:—so that, in all cases in which the *eye* of the Lord is represented as in any work, it may fairly be considered as inclusive of His *power* as well as His knowledge. Under a different figure, God's unceasing care of His church is finely expressed by the prophet Isaiah:—"In that day, sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."†—JESUS, our Immanuel, we have seen, is represented as himself the divine Builder—possessing this omniscience in union with power. How, then, can the work ever fail? Still further, we have the promise of *the constant and copious effusion of the Holy Spirit*. We have seen how this is included in the vision; and while the might and power of man are pronounced altogether incompetent, this divine influence is promised, as ensuring success:—"not by might, nor by power, but by MY SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts." This, to a cer-

* In Rev. v. 6, we have terms which serve to confirm the explanation—the "*seven horns*" of the Lamb representing his *omnipotence*, and the *seven eyes* his *omniscience*.

† Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

tain extent, was true of the existing case. Faith, fortitude, energy, and perseverance, were specially needful for its effectual prosecution; and were supplied by the influence of the divine Spirit in the leaders, in the people, and in the prophets. But it is, in a peculiar sense and degree, true of the building up of the *spiritual* temple. In it there is not only an operation of the Spirit required for fitting the builders for their duty;—there is an operation required on the *stones themselves*, such as no other energy but that of God's own Spirit can effect. They must be *living stones*. They are sinners, previously spiritually dead, but made alive unto God. And this giving of life to the dead is God's work alone. All attempts to promote Christianity by human power and human authority have invariably and necessarily failed. Mere external constrained uniformity is not Christianity. Christianity, when transfused from the book to the person, consists in spiritually enlightened minds and renewed hearts: and by no power can these be produced but that of "the Spirit of the living God."—And even all the legitimate, zealous, scripturally directed efforts for the advancement of the great work, must prove inefficacious and fruitless, unless God give His influence with them. Not a stone can be added to a stone in the living temple but by the gracious vivifying energy of this promised Spirit. But *having* the promise of this divine energy, we need never despond. *Need!* nay, we *must not*. To despond is *criminal*; for it is *faithless*. This, as I have said, is the spirit and life of the whole lesson. We are not to be disheartened by small beginnings, or unpromising circumstances. The cause is God's. "The residue of the Spirit is with Him." And from small beginnings He has already, in times past, brought about great results. Thus the ancient Church was animated to look with confidence for the accomplishment of all the glorious things awaiting her at the "fulness of time," by being reminded of her small beginnings:—"Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare

you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody."* The prospects of the ancient Church were all verified, and are *now* our remembrances, and our encouragements in anticipating what yet remains to be fulfilled. And we look too to the "day of small things" in the outset of the *new* Dispensation. We look at it during our Lord's personal ministry, and in the small company in the upper room during the "forty days" after his rising from the dead. How little appearance—how little promise, was there! But soon we see the outpouring of the promised Spirit; and then sinners are quickened by thousands. The "living temple" rises rapidly, in all its purity and beauty—"majestic in its own simplicity!" And to other and later periods of the history of the Church we might point, for other exemplifications of the same thing. The history of the origin and progress of some of the greatest and most successful institutions in our own day for the promotion of Christianity, presents us with striking lessons of the folly of "despising the day of small things." To take one example. An incidental conversation between two or three individuals, respecting the want of the Holy Scriptures in some parts of Wales, about half a century ago, gave origin to the most magnificent of all modern Christian institutions; an institution, whose salutary and life-giving operations embrace the entire globe, which dispenses the word of truth and salvation in almost all the known languages of men; and the cessation of whose benevolent exertions would be felt as a heavy calamity by every kindred and people and nation and tongue! Need I name the British and Foreign Bible Society?—The parables of the mustard-seed and the leaven are illustrations, from the lips of divine wisdom itself, of the same truth. An ignorant and thoughtless man, in stepping across a little trickling streamlet, might despise it

* Isa. li. 1—3.

as unworthy of his notice. And yet, that streamlet becomes the mighty river, from the ports of whose widening frith there goes forth the commerce of the world. The same man, picking up an acorn, without being aware what seed it was, might think nothing of it; and when he saw it inserted in the earth, might anticipate the springing from it of a diminutive and dwarfish plant. But the acorn is the enfolded embryo of the huge and venerable oak, the future material of the vessels in which that commerce is freighted, and borne to the ends of the earth. So is it in the administration of Providence. How often have events apparently trivial and contemptible proved like the river-spring in the mountain's side, or like the embryo seed,—extensive and mighty in their ultimate results!

Brethren, we are often, both ministers and people, and with too good reason alas! deploring the limited extent of success attending the preaching of the Gospel, and the use of other means for the instruction and conversion of sinners, both at home and abroad; and the lamentable fact that even now,—eighteen centuries and a half from the Saviour's birth,—it should still be so emphatically, in regard to the prevalence of the Gospel—*"the day of small things."* Why is it so? Why have ministers in general so much cause for saying, with a heart-drawn sigh—"We have laboured in vain; we have spent our strength for nought and in vain?" and why have their people so much cause to join in the lamentation? Without at all entering into this inquiry, I would only ask, May not *one* reason, and not the least, be, the want of a proper sense of our dependence, for all success, on the influence of the Spirit of God?—and the deficiency in the spirit of fervent personal and social prayer for that influence? God "will not give His glory to another." The maxim of His government, in all things, is—"Him that honoureth me I will honour." We do not honour God, when we fail to cherish this sense of dependence on Him in everything: when we either look for the conversion of the world by any other doctrine than His own truth, or by any other accompanying influence than that

of His own Spirit. Let us accompany prayer with zealous action and liberal gift; and accompany action and gift with fervent, believing, importunate prayer. We cannot expect it to be anything else than "the day of small things" in success, if it is the day of small things with ourselves, in effort, and contribution, and prayer.

Finally, let all enemies and despisers of the work of God,—all who neglect His great salvation, who trifle with and slight the offers of His mercy, who refuse the virtue of His Son's blood, disown His Spirit, and take no interest in the progress of His cause, but rather oppose and thwart than promote it; let all such bethink themselves. The Jews prospered, and successfully finished their work, in spite of their enemies; because God was with them. The "might and power" of man were against them:—but a higher might and power were on their side. Thus it is still; and thus it shall be to the last. And when the temple of God shall be finished, and "the headstone brought out with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it,"—what shall the end be of those who cannot join in the acclamations? They who have taken no concern about, and no part in, the work, can have no share in the final joy. The great Master-BUILDER, pointing to the glorious structure—his own completed achievement—will say, "BEHOLD, YE DESPISERS, AND WONDER, AND PERISH!"

LECTURE VI.

ZECH. V.

"Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits. Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name; and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof. Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork; and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar; and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base."

IN this chapter we have two distinct visions—the *sixth* and the *seventh* in the series. In the interpretation of all the visions, there are two extremes,—so at least I am disposed to regard them,—which it is desirable to avoid. The one is, the confining of the visions too exclusively to the Jewish people and the times which were then passing over them:—the other is, explaining one or two of the earlier visions

as referring to the then existing condition, or immediate prospects of that people, and the rest as leaving them altogether behind; and, as a chain of successive historical predictions, carrying forward the future destinies of the Church of God in the Christian age,—its corruptions, persecutions, hindrances and progress to the end of time. Thus Stonard—because the former chapter, in the vision which it contains, looks forward to the times of the promised Messiah, especially when taken in connexion with that which had preceded it, where the Messiah is clearly introduced under the designation of “Jehovah’s Servant THE BRANCH,”—takes for granted that there must be no *reverting*, in the visions which follow, to the times then present and the circumstances and prospects of the people among whom the Prophet delivered his divine revelations. But this is an extravagant assumption. According to him, both the one and the other of the two visions in this chapter relate not at all to the Jews, but to the Christian Church, to its corruption in principle and in practice, especially during the early rise and progressively darkening and vitiating influence of Antichrist—establishing idolatry, with its attendant follies and wickednesses, and provoking the divine displeasure and curse. Yet this able interpreter himself fails in carrying out his own principle—the principle, I mean, that in the successive visions there should be no *reverting* to times or events referred to in those which preceded. For in the visions immediately preceding those in this chapter we have the progress of the Christian Church even to its final completion,—the building up of the spiritual temple till “the head-stone is brought forth with shoutings of Grace, grace unto it;” and yet, on his own admission, there is, in the visions now before us, a *reverting* to the early history of that Church—that “living temple.” Now an interpreter cannot be entitled, when it suits his own convenience, to violate a principle which he denies to be admissible in the expositions of others. He seems sensible of this, and tries to meet the objection; but we think unsuccessfully. In his exposition too, “*the earth*,” as in our translation,—“*the land*,” as rendered (more correctly we

think) by others,—is made to signify neither *the whole earth* nor the *land of Judea*, but what he describes as “the seat of the people professing the Christian religion”—“Christendom or the Roman Empire.” This, as well as various other particulars in his interpretation, seems unnatural and forced. There are two things which, in order to the just understanding of the visions, it is necessary to bear in mind. The *first* is, that there appears no sufficient evidence that the visions are a connected chain of successive symbolical predictions, each following the other in time, and taking up the series of events or of characteristic changes in the state of the Church, where the other left it. There is no possibility of making this out, without such a straining and twisting as is quite inadmissible. The *second* is, that there does not appear sufficient evidence, respecting some of the visions, that they are either entirely prophetic, or even prophetic at all. The visions of a prophet, or seer, might be intended to teach and enforce important *lessons*, as well as to unfold *future events*. We think, then, it may be adopted as a fair principle of interpretation, that in these visions there is to be found, generally, a reference to something present blending with, and shooting forward at times to what is future; especially to events connected with the coming and work, and kingdom of the promised Messiah; and that both are, at the same time, mixed up with salutary warnings and lessons of duty. With these impressions, let us look at the first of the two visions in this chapter. It will serve to exemplify and confirm the remarks just made:—

Verses 1, 2. “Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll. And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.” What was here seen?—“*A roll.*” We have mention made of such rolls by Ezra, by Isaiah, by Jeremiah, and by Ezekiel. Ezra speaks of search being made in “the house of the rolls”—the depository of the public archives or records,—and of a “roll” being found there in which was recorded the decree of king Darius respecting the Jews. And

Jeremiah speaks of "*a roll of a Book.*" The Book might be considered as consisting of several "rolls" over each other, and forming one volume. This is illustrated by the *Book* which John saw in "the right hand of Him that sat on the throne;" which was "sealed with seven seals;" and of which the contents were brought to view, as each of the seals was successively broken, and the "roll" which it fastened unfolded. The ancients wrote on a variety of materials;—the papyrus, or paper-reed; the inner bark of particular trees; and the dressed skins of animals forming a kind of parchment. These, when written, were rolled up, for convenience, and for preservation of the writing, either singly or in a number over each other. The roll seen by the prophet was "a flying roll;" but not flying through the air in its rolled up state. It was expanded, and was of extraordinary size. Reckoning the cubit at a foot and a half, it was *ten yards* in length by *five* in width,—the measurement being guessed by the prophet's eye.

Its large size might denote two things;—the large number and amount of the divine denunciations it contained; and, at the same time, there being room for writing them large, that they might be "seen and read of all men." This latter lesson is also implied in the roll being *open*; not rolled up and sealed, but fully expanded to view, that nothing it contained might be concealed. It was, at the same time, "*flying.*" By which also two things might be denoted;—that it was not meant for any particular city or locality, but to make a progress through the length and breadth of the land; and also, that the denunciations of Jehovah written in it would come speedily and surely on those against whom they were pointed.

The explanation is immediately given by the interpreting angel—verses 3, 4. "Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it. I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the

thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." The import of "*This is the curse*," is abundantly manifest. The curse of the divine law—the denunciation of divine retribution and vengeance against all transgressors of it—was legibly and openly written therein. And that one of the meanings we have attached to its "flying" is correct, appears from the very terms here used—it "*goeth forth over the whole land*."

And mark the two descriptions of trespass that are here particularly selected and specified:—"every one that *stealeth*, and every one that *sweareth*." I need hardly say, for no one will imagine it, that "the curse" was to be confined exclusively to these two specified crimes—theft, and false or profane swearing. They are a part for the whole. And it has been justly remarked, that one of them is taken from the second table of the law, and the other from the first; the one being a sin directly against *man*, the other directly against *God*. They may therefore be taken as representing the whole Law. And "the curse" was to be impartially executed. It was to go forth, to "*cut off*"—or, as it has been rendered, to "*clear away*"—transgressors, wherever they were found, "on this side and on that side;" all who practised injustice and dishonesty, in whatever form, to their neighbours; all who withheld from God the "reverence and godly fear" which was His due, in principle and in action.

And "the curse" was most fearful. It was of all *inevitable*:—"I will bring it forth, saith THE LORD." And who can elude His eye? who can withstand His power? Then, further, it is *penetrating*. Nothing escapes it. It assails the man himself, and it finds its way to everything connected with him,—to the very timber and stones of his dwelling. It rests on and consumes all he is, and all he has. Further still, it is *domestic* as well as personal. The character affects the family. A dishonest and profane father was most likely to have dishonest and profane children; and thus "the curse" would affect the household, and go down from generation to

generation. Which leads me to notice lastly, that it is *abiding*. Not only does it "enter into his house," it "*remains in the midst of it*;" like a leprosy, infecting, wasting, consuming, destroying. It is a curse that embitters every sweet, and gives more than twofold intensity to every bitter. It dooms to destruction the man and all his possessions. And from this world it must accompany and follow him to another, and settle with him there for ever. The special reference made to their houses, with the "stones thereof and the timber thereof," forcibly points to the care which they had been taking of their own accommodation, in comfort and elegance, while JEHOVAH'S HOUSE was neglected. *

This, then, I take to be one of the cases, in which there is more of *lesson* than of *prophecy*; more of faithful and salutary admonition, than of direct prediction. If there can be said to be prediction at all, it is only the prediction, conditionally, of the evils contained in God's "curse," as sure to come on "the workers of iniquity." There is no prediction of any specific future event. There is no more of prediction than there is in the general declaration, "*Evil shall slay the wicked*."

What, then, is the great lesson,—what the import of the admonition, thus symbolically conveyed? It is, *first*, that God's law remained the same, now that they were restored to the land of their fathers, as when their fathers first settled in it. It was still a "fiery law," as it was when delivered from Sinai. The curses then pronounced, in Jehovah's name, by their inspired lawgiver, had not been cancelled. Here they are—produced anew: and, I may add, with the attestation to the divine faithfulness in their infliction, experienced by themselves in the very captivity from which they had just been rescued. The lesson and the warning were as seasonable as they were salutary. The captivity had been a divine visitation,—a penal infliction. It was designed, like all other divine judgments, to "lead to repent-

* In the language there is manifestly a reference to the awful terms in which divine curses were denounced in Jehovah's name by Moses. See Deut. xxviii. 1—6, 15—19.

ance." And now that they were again partaking of the divine goodness,—now that God had come to them in the land of their bondage, and vouchsafed their deliverance, and settled them anew in their own Canaan,—they were to beware of taking encouragement from His kindness to continue in sin; to repeat the trespasses that had exposed their fathers and themselves to His displeasure and to temporary abandonment and suffering. They were rather to "confess and forsake," that they might continue to "find mercy."—The lesson, under a different form, was also, that the land to which they had been restored must be held *by the same tenure as before*. God had given it originally *by promise*. By faith of the promise it was obtained. By "the obedience of faith" it was held. The inheritance was never "of the law;" was never held by any *legal tenure*—by any kind of *desert*—any *right* arising out of the doings of those who occupied it.

Verses 5—11. "Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; (for they had wings like the wings of a stork;) and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base."

This vision of the "*woman in the ephah*" is one of which the obscurity and difficulty have been not a little felt. And various, accordingly, have been the interpretations proposed of it. The expositor whom I mentioned in the beginning

of this Lecture, in full consistency with his general principle,—while he considers the “*wickedness*” exposed in it as meaning specially *idolatry*, interprets it of the idolatry of the corrupted, or apostate, *Christian church*—the idolatry of popery. He regards the concealment of it within the ephah as symbolical of the delusion practised on the multitude, so that they incur the guilt of idolatry hiddenly to themselves,—unconsciously of the crime. There is much, we think, here, as in the interpretation of the preceding vision, that is forced and out of place. And the same remark applies to his view of the “two winged women” by whom the ephah is borne away; whom he identifies with “the two witnesses” in the Book of Revelation. It would be wrong to deny the merit of ingenuity and plausibility to this theory—or rather to the manner in which it is maintained. But it is more ingenious than solid.

At first view, I was disposed to be much enamoured of the interpretation given by Dr. Henderson. He too regards the “wickedness” as meaning *idolatry*; while the *woman* in the ephah he takes to be the *symbol of idolatry*; and the “two women” by whom the ephah, with this wickedness carefully secured in it, is carried away to the land of Shinar, or Babylon, as symbolizing “the Assyrian and Babylonian powers, by which (to use his own words) God removed idolatry, in the persons of the apostate Hebrews, out of the Holy Land,”—to have its place in a land where idolatry was its very characteristic; where it was indigenous and abundant. “In this striking hieroglyphic,” says this able critic, “we are taught how idolatry, with all its accompanying atrocities, was removed from the land of the Hebrews, which it had desecrated, to a country devoted to it, and where it was to commingle with its native elements, never to be reimported into Canaan. How exactly has the prediction been fulfilled! From the time of the captivity to the present, a period of more than two thousand years, the Hebrew people have never once lapsed into idolatry. The whole vision was intended to convince them of the greatness of the evil.” There is something in this interpretation so very pleasing, that one naturally feels a

strong predisposition to adopt it. Objections, however, have suggested themselves to my mind, which I am at a loss to get over. They are especially *two*. 1. How comes a *woman* to be the symbol of *idolatry*?—not of an idolatrous church, observe, but of *idolatry*? There is no parallel passage for this; nothing, so far as my memory serves me, at all analogous to it in the Scriptures. That the Jewish people, or Jewish church, should be so symbolized, is in harmony with a great deal of the language of Scripture. Jehovah is represented as espousing that church to himself: and He himself frequently, by the prophets, makes use of this image. “The daughter of Zion” too is one of the common designations of Israel by the inspired prophets. When she departs from Jehovah by idolatry, she is represented as unfaithful to her espousals, and “playing the harlot:” but nowhere do we find *idolatry itself* represented under the symbol of a *woman*. An *idolatrous church*—as for instance the mystical Babylon—may be, and is; but not *idolatry itself*. This objection is double. It is negative and positive. *Negative*, inasmuch as the supposed symbol is unsupported by any parallels; and *positive*, inasmuch as a woman *is* the common symbol of both the Old and the New Testament churches,—of both the true church and the false.—2. On the principle of this interpretation, we have a question to ask, Was the statement of the interpreting angel in verse sixth *true*? The statement is, “This is their resemblance,” their appearance, their fair representation*—“through all the land.” Now, if *idolatry* be signified by the emblem, is this correct? According to the expositor’s own admission, there was at the time no such thing as idolatry. He speaks of the vision as a “*prediction*;” but, in this respect, there was *no prediction*:—the banishment of idolatry was an event *already past*. But the whole style of the emblematic representation implies its reference to something *yet to be done*.

On these grounds I have been constrained to abandon this

* עֵינֵי, lit. *eye*; but it signifies also that which presents itself to the eye—*appearance*. See Lev. xiii. 55, Numb. xi. 7, &c.—ED.

interpretation. Let us now, then, look a little more closely at what was presented to the Prophet's view.

1. "*An ephah.*" This was a common Jewish measure, the same as a "*bath*;" containing ten "*homers*," or about an English *bushel*. It was "*going forth*:" it is not said *whence*; but the phrase is significant of the incipient outgoings, in their fulfilment, of the divine counsels. The mouth of the ephah was covered with a round piece of lead, very heavy. That the original word is sometimes rendered "*a talent*," as our translators have rendered it here, is true: but it means too a *round cake* of metal.* A talent would be upwards of a hundredweight, which, in such a connexion, is out of the question. When the leaden cover was "*lifted up*," there was seen "*a woman sitting in the midst of the ephah.*" From this some have imagined the ephah to have been the figure and appearance of that measure, but of a gigantic size. But there is no ground whatever for supposing the figure of the woman to have been of the size of a full-grown female. The ephah we conceive to have been of the ordinary dimensions, and the female figure to have been, as a matter of course, one in miniature.—Then, pronouncing the words, "*This is wickedness*," the angel either cast in something else, so designated, into "*the ephah*," beside the woman; or rather, perhaps, as some translate, "*threw her down in the midst of the ephah*," and covered it closely up again with the ponderous leaden lid. Then there came forth "*two women*;" who had wings like storks' wings, strong and ample; and "*the wind in their wings*"—to represent the swiftness of their movements, flying before the wind, instead of struggling against it. These women took up the ephah, with the woman thus secured in it, to carry it to the land of Babylon,—there to have a lasting place. They lift it above all the obstacles to their progress on the earth's surface, that they may bear it along the more freely: and their "*building a house for it*," and setting it on its own base, and establishing it, strongly express the idea of *long*, though it might

* The word is ככר —Ed.

not be permanent continuance. To get at the meaning, we ask the four following questions:—Who, or what, is represented by *the woman*? Why is she borne away *in an ephah*? Why is the ephah *covered*? And why is she borne to “*the land of Babylon*?”

1. Who, or what, is represented by *the woman*?—I have already said enough to indicate my answer to this inquiry. There is nothing else that can well be supposed to be represented by the symbol, but the Jewish people—the nation of Israel,—the ancient Church of God—“the daughter of Zion.” I acquiesce, then, in this interpretation; which is the one most commonly received.

2. But why is the woman represented as seated *in an ephah*?—As to what the ephah is, there exists of course no difficulty. But to the question just put, *Why in an ephah*? I have never seen any reply that has been satisfactory; nor, indeed, any reply attempted at all. This has seemed to me strange. There must surely be *some* meaning in this part of the hieroglyphic. I am disposed, then, to understand the *ephah* as the apt emblem of *traffic*, or *merchandise*. It was one of the most common measures in use among the Jews. In proof of this it may be noticed, that it is selected as the representative of measures in general. Thus in Deut. xxv. 14 it is said—“Thou shalt not have in thine house diverse measures, a great and a small:”—on the margin the literal rendering is given—“Thou shalt not have in thine house *an ephah and an ephah*, a great and a small.” The ephah, then, is a sufficiently appropriate symbol of the merchandise, or business, of this world; and *the woman seated in the ephah*, of the Jewish people immersed in worldliness.

This worldliness—this eager thirst after earthly things—mingled with a large amount of dishonesty and deceit in their acquisition, was a ground of divine complaint and expostulation by the prophets, previously to the captivity. Their *idolatries* might then be the chief theme of censure and remonstrance; but it was far from being the only one. Take an example:—“Hear this, O ye that swallow up

the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, saying, When will the new-moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; yea, and sell the refuse of the wheat?"* The suitableness of the ephah in the passage before us is here farther established by the circumstance that "selling corn," and "setting forth wheat," are given as the principal department of Jewish merchandise. We have further to notice, that the same worldly disposition had manifested itself *after* the return from the captivity, as well as before. "I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also, wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath-day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel, by profaning the sabbath."† Here is the very same evil. There was now no *idolatry*: but there was still "the love of this present world," setting aside the commands of God and the obligations of godliness. And the same spirit is complained of by Jehovah, through the prophet Haggai.‡ And, although by the remonstrances of Nehemiah and Ezra, and Haggai and Zechariah, this worldly propensity had been so far corrected, that they had set to in greater earnest to the building of the temple, yet

* Amos viii. 4—6.

† Neh. xiii. 10, 15—18.

‡ See Hag. i. 3—11; and chap. ii. 10—14.

still there was a large amount of it. Malachi may be cited as a witness, to the same effect: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." * And does not the language of the *ninth* verse in particular correspond strikingly with the end of verse sixth of our present text?—in the one, "Ye have robbed me, *even this whole nation*;" in the other, "This is their resemblance, or appropriate representation, *through all the land*." And the character was kept up. Though there was no direct defection to idolatry, —*the world* had full possession of them; they abode in the "ephah." What, indeed, was the cause of all their worldly and secular conceptions and anticipations of the kingdom of their Messiah, but this thorough *earthly-mindedness*? Their character in the days of the Messiah was anticipated by the same prophet—Malachi: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." † And the character has been stamped, and stereotyped, and proverbialized, to the present day. This, then, I take to be the symbolical import of "the woman in the ephah."

* Mal. iii. 8—10.

† See chap. iii. 1, with verses 5, 6.

3. The ephah was *covered*: the heavy lid of lead was carefully put down upon the mouth of it. This appears a sufficiently significant emblem of *the impossibility of escape* from the execution of God's merited judgments. The woman is shut up securely in the ephah, when it is about to be borne away. So the Jewish people, considered conditionally as retaining their character, should be carried away *in their worldliness*. There would be no escape, and no power to rescue. As the very "ephah," the instrument of their merchandise and wealth, is represented as becoming the means of confinement; so does the earthliness, the worldly-mindedness, the ambition and covetousness, of the Jewish people, *shut them up* to retributive vengeance. It was a species of idolatry—spiritual idolatry; alienating their hearts from God; making them devotees of mammon. With equal truth might it be said of this as of idolatry—"This is wickedness." It is, I conceive, too readily and confidently taken for granted, that this can mean nothing else than idolatry. Worldliness is ungodliness; and ungodliness is "wickedness." You will have seen that I agree with those who interpret the carrying away of the ephah from the land of Judah of the then future and more lasting banishment of Israel from that land, if, through the power of worldliness they persisted in their unbelief and rebellion against Jehovah and his Anointed. I know not why the powers by which this ejection from their own land was to be effected are represented as *women*, unless it be for the unity of the figure;—the nation of Israel being represented by a woman; and, in correspondence with this, the national powers which are to be the agents in the divine visitation being naturally so represented too. The *two* women do not necessarily mean the combining of *two* nations, but are merely, perhaps, for the convenience of transporting the ephah in the vision; one being needed on either side. We have only to inquire—

4. Why to "*the land of Shinar*," or *Babylon*? The second captivity was not to be literally thither, but to a much wider extent. They were to be—as they actually have been—scattered over the face of the earth; or, in the

words of the Saviour himself, "carried away captive into all nations." But the denunciation of this is couched under the type of the former captivity—the literally Babylonish one. As that dispersion had been for their crimes, so should they be carried away again; the captivity from which they had been restored, should be repeated. A people, whose conquests would, for their rapidity, be suitably symbolized by the wings of the stork aided by the wind, should sweep them off their land. The very word "*Shinar*" signifies "*shaking out*." And the closing part of the representation plainly indicates the *much more lasting duration* of the second dispersion. The "building of a house" for the ephah, with the woman, and the "setting of it on its own base"—represent this. It has now continued for near two thousand years: and the miraculous fact of their having remained, during all that long period, and in their scattered state, a distinct people, while it proves God's faithfulness to his *threatenings*, is, at the same time, a ground of confidence that, though lasting, it is not to be permanent. And will it be considered as an overstretching of the symbol, if I add, that, as the house is built, not for the woman merely, but for the ephah in which she sat, the people continue, during all that period, *in their worldliness*,—exhibiting the same character, till the time come when "the vail" that hides from their eyes the glories of the true Messiah "shall be taken away," and they shall yet again experience the restoring goodness of the God of their ancient fathers. Whether it was meant by the symbol or not, it has been, and is, strikingly true.

I close with two general reflections; one from each of the two visions:—

1. Although the "flying roll," inscribed with the curses of God's law, is, in the vision, represented (for so we have understood the terms) as going forth specially over *the land*, the land of Israel;—yet the law and the curse are not to be considered as thus limited. The law is universal; and the curse is of the same extent with the law. The language of the law—to this hour unmodified—is, "Cursed is every one

that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." As far as conscience goes in the correct intimation of the divine will, and the distinctions between moral good and moral evil, they who are without a written revelation, "are a law unto themselves." And wherever the written revelation, embodying the written law, comes, it comes to all alike with the same authority, and pronounces its curses on all alike with the same unreservedness. The curses are wide-sweeping. They include all who, in spirit, in word, or in action, trespass against the two great principles, *love to God, and love to man*. Where on earth, then, is the man of whom they do not lay hold?—where the man that is not doomed by them to "die the death?"—What thanks do we not owe to God, that there is another "flying roll?"—a roll inscribed, not with curses, but with promises and blessings!—"the volume of the Book," in which it is written of Christ—of the person and work; the righteousness, atonement, intercession, and reign of the Son of God! But for the contents of *that* Roll, no sinner on earth could ever have escaped from the curses of the other. Yet the contents of the two are in perfect harmony. They who, by believing the truths, and trusting in the promises, of the latter, are delivered from the condemning curses of the former, are not exempted from the authority and obligation of its precepts. The Jews, as God's chosen and peculiar people, had, by their separation to Him, no such privilege (if privilege that ought to be called which would itself be the direst curse) as that of freedom to sin. As God's people, they were bound to "glorify God in their body and in their spirit." And so is it, in a still higher sense, with the spiritual Israel under the New Covenant dispensation. He who defrauds men, or perjures himself to God, while professing to be one of God's "chosen generation and peculiar people," only enhances the guilt of the sin by the additional guilt of hypocrisy. The curses written in this Book, instead of letting that man go, will hold him in their arrest with the firmer grasp. They will cleave to him through life. They will embitter his plea-

tures, and sharpen and envenom the stings of his sorrows. Like "a fire not blown, they will consume him." They will haunt his spirit with tormenting fears in "the valley of the shadow of death." They will cleave to his ashes in the grave, and be his soul's wretched inheritance for ever! *They* only are really safe from the curse, who, while they are trusting in the mercy of God, through the blood of Christ, for acceptance and life, are showing their faith by their works,—showing that the blood which imparts peace, imparts also purity,—“purging their consciences from dead works, to serve the living God.” That man no curse can overtake. God’s blessing will attend him through life and death, accompanying him to heaven, and be his portion there for ever!

2. *Worldliness* is the ruin of thousands and tens of thousands. It is not at all necessary to insure a man’s perdition, that he either “steal” or “swear falsely.” A man may be a thorough *worldling*, without the practice of these or any gross iniquities. Whatever shuts God out from His place in the heart as the object of fear and love, and from His place in the conscience as the authoritative regulator of the life,—*that*, be it what it may, is the ruin of the man. In the parable of the marriage feast, the men who declined the invitation, and “went away to their farms and to their merchandise,” are not charged with any selfish and fraudulent dealing in the management of their farms or the prosecution of their merchandise. What was their sin? *WORLDLINESS*. They preferred the world to God. They declined the blessings of the Gospel for something more to their taste. Instead of “seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” they “neglected the great salvation.” They chose the world and the things of the world—no matter in how innocent a form—even the sweets of domestic life itself—to God and the things of God. And in the enjoyment of these, as their chosen portion, they “had their reward.” Thus it was of old; thus it is still. Let no man deceive himself by fancying it necessary to his forfeiture of the blessings of God’s salvation, that he give himself up to the practice of

dishonesty and of open vice. If his heart is in the world, with the world he must have his portion. If he is "*in the Ephah*," he must be carried away with it.

And let Christians be on their guard against "the love of this present world." It is an insinuating and perilous principle. In proportion as it gains upon the heart, it tends to enfeeble the energies, and deaden the sensibilities, of the divine life in the soul. God will not have a divided heart. "YE CANNOT SERVE GOD AND MAMMON."

And, as it was the Jewish Church collectively that was "*in the Ephah*"—worldliness having become one of its general characteristics, so may it be still with New Testament churches. There are two of the varieties among the seven churches of Asia, which, in this respect, form a contrast to each other. Of the church in Smyrna the Saviour says—"I know thy poverty, but thou art rich:"—of the church in Laodicea—"Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art poor and miserable, and wretched, and blind and naked." In the one case, there was poverty in this world's goods, but spiritual riches:—in the other there was worldly prosperity and respectability, in which she was tempted to trust and glory, while there was spiritual destitution. Worldliness was the cause of that "lukewarmness" in spirit and in conduct, which the Saviour loathed; which drew down his severe rebuke, and endangered her being utterly cast off. All churches that connect themselves with the governments of this world necessarily expose themselves to a secularizing influence, such as tends to impair and destroy their spirituality. They get imbued with the world's spirit. They are "*in the Ephah*," and in danger of speedy and complete removal.

LECTURE VII.

ZECH. VI.

"And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass. In the first chariot were red horses, and in the second chariot black horses, and in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses. Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go, that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth. Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country. And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the Lord. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord; and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God."

THIS vision is the last in the series; and of all the seven it is perhaps the most obscure. The obscurity regards, not

so much the symbols themselves, as their application. Whether this would be more obvious to the Prophet himself, and to the people among whom he exercised his ministry; and whether to them any additional explanations accompanied the description of the vision, we cannot with certainty say. What, then, was seen?

1. "*Four chariots*:" probably war chariots; such as were used in battle, and in triumphal processions for victory and peace. There is no specified difference between the chariots. The difference, as we shall immediately see, is in the horses by which they were, respectively, drawn. And, as they were drawn by horses, the likelihood is that they were driven by charioteers, and, in a word, fully equipped.

2. These chariots came out "from between *two mountains*;" and the mountains are emphatically said to have been "*mountains of brass*," or of *copper*. The latter phrase is generally understood as signifying mountains such as those in which copper or brass was found. Yet, when the scene is exhibited in a vision, and is entirely symbolical, there seems no necessity for keeping thus strictly to nature. Why not *brazen mountains*? The difference between the external superficial appearance of mountains containing copper beneath is not so very marked in nature as to warrant its being so emphatically specified in the vision as striking the Prophet's eye. If the supposition of brazen mountains makes the symbol more appropriate and significant,—this is enough. In a vision, anything is admissible, natural or unnatural, that conveys impressively the intended idea. Brass is one of the Bible emblems of strength and stability. Thus, when God promises to Jeremiah to strengthen and protect him against his enemies, He not only engages to make him *a wall*, but a "*brazen wall*."* We consider the mountains in the vision as having been, to the Prophet's entranced eye, literally "*of brass*."

3. In these chariots were *horses of different colours*—verses 2, 3. "In the first chariot were red horses, and in the

* Jer. i. 18, 19; and chap. xv. 20.

second chariot black horses, and in the third chariot white horses, and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses." There is no dispute about the *red*, the *black*, and the *white*. With regard to the "*grisled and bay*,"—the word rendered *bay* is, on the margin, as in the Vulgate Latin, "*strong*." This, however, is evidently out of harmony with the rest of the description, which all relates to *colour*. Probably, therefore, it should, by another etymology—agreeably to the Septuagint Greek, and to the judgment of critics generally, be rendered as a colour too; and as meaning *piebald grey*, or *piebald bay*—similar to what we had in a former vision, where it is rendered *speckled*.*

Our next question is, What was meant? The symbols are simple; but the question as to their *import* has given rise to opinions not a little various. We have an inquiry addressed by the Prophet to the interpreting Angel, and the interpreter's answer. But the explanation of the symbol leaves as much room for diversity of opinion as the symbol itself:—verses 4, 5. "Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord? And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the LORD of all the earth."

But what is meant by the "*four spirits of the heavens*?" Eminent interpreters translate the words "*celestial spirits*," and thus present us at once, in our own customary phraseology, with *angels*. There is difficulty, here, however. In the first place, "*spirits of the heavens*" is a very unwonted designation for angels in Scripture. I know not that it has a parallel. And, secondly, if angels are intended, how come we to have *four*? Their number is "ten thousand times ten thousand;" and, unless they are mentioned in connexion with something else that leads and limits to the number *four*, it is difficult, by any analogy, to account for it. Let me illustrate the remark from another passage:—"And after these

* Compare Dr. Henderson's note; who derives the word not from the Heb. root צָרַח, but from the Arabic. The rendering of the LXX. is ἑπτακοι ποικίλοι ψαροί.—ED.

things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.* Here we have "*four angels*." But we at once see *why* they are four. They are, in the vision, employed in "holding the *four winds* of the earth." Now, the four winds, from the four cardinal points—understood as representing and embracing all the intermediate points, and thus signifying the winds in general—was a style of expression familiar to the ancients as ourselves. The word rendered "*spirits*," as most, if not all of you are aware, signifies also *winds*. The question, then, is, whether what are called "the four winds of *the earth*" in the Book of Revelation be not the same as what are here called "the four spirits," or winds, "*of the heavens*." And that the meaning *is* the same receives confirmation from the language of Daniel:—"Daniel spake, and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea."† I am strongly tempted to think that we have, in this vision, one symbol, or emblem, explained by another. "*The four winds*" are an emblem—a most natural and appropriate one—of all the various powers and agencies by which the earth can be affected; especially *agencies of judgment*—of wars and desolations, arising from the contending elements of human passions and Satanic malignity. That such is the import of the "four winds" in the vision of John referred to, is clear from the context: "And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."‡

Still there is a difficulty in the passage before us. It is said in the interpretation—"These are the four winds of heaven, *that go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth*." This is natural, as applied to *angels*, but not, it

* Rev. vii. 1.

† Dan. vii. 2.

‡ Rev. vii. 2, 3.

must be confessed, as applied to *winds*. What are we to say, then? *This*, I am disposed to think. In the vision in Revelation, angels are represented as "holding back the four winds," preventing them from exerting their destructive and desolating force. In the passage before us, the "four winds"—representing the divine agencies, especially though not exclusively for judicial infliction, are symbolized by "four chariots" which are described as "going forth" in different directions; that is, for the execution of the divine purposes—as the winds blow in different directions. Now, if in John's vision the angels are represented as *holding* the winds, may not the angels, in the vision of Zechariah, be considered as *directing* the winds? May they not "stand before the Lord of the whole earth," to receive their instructions as to the quarters to which, and the purposes for which, these hieroglyphical chariots are to be driven; and as the commissioned vicegerents of the divine Lord of the earth, be regarded as taking the reins of guidance, under his authoritative direction?—I am far from saying that objections may not lie against *this* view of the case. Perhaps, however, they are fewer and less strong than those which lie against *other* views.

Let us now just look at the *different colours of the horses*. What might be the general import of this part of the vision?—I must first, however, notice the different views which have been taken of the "four chariots," with their "horses" and their charioteers. Some—perhaps most interpreters—understand them to represent the *four great monarchies*, so repeatedly referred to in prophecy—the Chaldean, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. Some interpret them of the various changes among the nations by wars and revolutions. Some, I believe, have found in them the four Gospels; and one eminent expositor refers them to the period of the history of the Christian Church after Constantine the Great;—the *first* to the wars of invaders of the Roman Empire, and the wars of controverted doctrines and opinions; the *second* to "the blackness of darkness,"—the ignorance, oppression and misery, of papal domination; the *third* to the

light and knowledge, the joy and triumph, of the Reformation; and the *fourth* to the mixed condition of things—the confusion of false doctrines and true, right and wrong precepts, holy and unholy rites of worship, subsequent to that great revolution. To these and other explanations I have one great objection; namely, that I do not think they are quite in harmony with the interpreting Angel's own explanation, which we have just been noticing. It strikes me, that that explanation requires our taking a view somewhat *more general* than any one of these; as implying that the vision was designed to convey and impress a *great general lesson*,—though not to the exclusion of exemplifications of that lesson. That lesson is,—and it was eminently fitted to sustain and animate the spirits of God's people in the prosecution of their work, amidst what enemies and discouragements soever might arise,—that all the variety of agencies and influences, for good or for evil,—for good to themselves and vengeance on their adversaries, when they cleaved faithfully to the name and ways and worship of Jehovah; and of judicial correction to themselves by means of these very adversaries, when they were rebellious and disobedient, and unfaithful to their covenant engagements,—that all this variety of agencies and influences, represented by “the four winds of the heavens,” was under the unceasing and irresistible control of Jehovah, aided in His administration by those “angels that excel in strength,”—those “ministers of his that do his pleasure;” “standing before him,” to receive and execute the “high behests of judgment or of mercy.” The variety of His dispensations is here indicated by the different colours of the horses:—the “*red*” signifying the warlike and sanguinary; the “*black*,” those of general calamity, distress, and mourning, whether from famine or pestilence, or any other cause; the “*white*,” those bringing with them prosperity and gladness; the “*grisled and bay*,” or *piebald*, that mixed state of the prosperous and the adverse, the light and dark, which is the most common condition of things in human society. And then, amidst endless variety and change, the steadfastly fixed, immove-

able, and definitely determined character of the Divine decrees or purposes, as signified by the "two mountains of brass," from between which these chariots and horses issued. I am aware, indeed, of the various interpretations which have also been given of these two mountains. Some look upon them as no more than an ornamental feature of the vision, and not designed to symbolize anything; a view, we think, by no means in harmony with the emphatic terms in which the mountains are described. One interpreter understands them of the Medes and Persians; "from between whom," he says, "or from the powerful empire which they formed, the instruments of God's providence were to proceed, to execute His purposes in punishing the nations."* Another† explains them of "the Jewish and Gentile branches of the Church, the two provinces of which the divine kingdom on earth consists, and which, though now mingled together in the common body of God's people, were originally distinct, and will hereafter appear so again, when the "fulness of the Gentiles" shall be come in, and the partial blindness of Israel shall be removed." This interpreter is much more confident about the correctness of this view, than any interpreter ought to be respecting any view on such a subject. He says of these mountains, that "they *are*, and *can be no other*" than the Jews and Gentiles as thus described. Yet the interpretation has little or nothing to support it; but seems to partake in the fancifulness of the theory of which it forms a part. I feel satisfied, that the view which has most to be said in its support is the most common one,—that to which I have already indicated my decided leaning,—that the brazen mountains are meant to represent the immoveably fixed character of the divine counsels or decrees; which, indeed, is the inevitable result of the absolute unchangeableness of God himself, who is "without variable-ness or shadow of turning;" and who says of himself—

* Henderson; who would regard the mountains as "corresponding to the two horns of the ram employed by Daniel to denote the same people." He does not, however, speak very confidently.—Ed.

† Stonard.

“My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” *Mountains* are the Bible emblems of *immoveable steadfastness*; and mountains of *brass* is just a strengthening of the emblem.* I prefer this interpretation of the symbol; and with the addition, which, I cannot but think, is rather finely given by CRUDEN in his Concordance, under the word *brass*:—“Mountains of brass denote the immoveable decrees of God, his steady execution of his counsels; and the insuperable restraints that are upon all empires and counsels, *which God keeps within the barriers of such impregnable mountains, that not one can start till he open the way.*”

I have said, that, while an important general principle, or lesson, is taught, it is, at the same time, exemplified; and exemplified with a special reference to the Jews in their existing condition. The directions in which the different chariots are represented as going forth are taken from the relative positions of the different countries to the land of Palestine:—verses 6, 7. “The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country. And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.” It is observable that “the *red*,” though mentioned first, as in one of the chariots seen in the vision, are not again introduced, as the others are. The reason is conceived to be—that in point of fact, *they had already gone forth*—referring to the bloody wars by which the Persians were, at that very time, assailing and wasting the Chaldeans, those enemies of Israel. “The *black*” were about to go forth into the “*north country*.” This, as I might show you from various passages of Scripture, is a designation for the land of Babylon.† That empire had been subdued by Cyrus; and that had led to the release of the captive Jews. But the doom of Babylon was not yet completed: its “burden,” to use the

* See Psal. lxx. 6; xxxvi. 6.

† Comp. Jer. iii. 18; vi. 22; xlv. 10.—Ed.

prophetic term, was not yet accumulated to its full weight. Babylon revolted under the reign of Darius; was invaded and besieged by that monarch with all his forces; and, after fearful ravages, reduced to desolation and solitude. And to this the language of the eighth verse is to be considered as referring, "Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country." On this verse observe—1. *The speaker*. It is not the interpreting Angel. "He cried upon me," or summoned me to him, are words which do not at all bear application to *him*; he being *beside* the Prophet. They relate to one at a greater distance. And from the language he uses, "these have quieted *my* spirit,"—he can be no other, than the divine Angel of the Covenant; of whom we have had occasion so frequently to speak.—2. They have "*quieted my spirit*,"—that is, appeased or pacified mine anger,—evidently refers to the satisfaction given to God's justice, in behalf of His oppressed people, in the execution of merited vengeance upon their enemies.* Remember what He had said, in the very first of these visions, "I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease; for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction:"—and when justice has visited the oppressors Jehovah is satisfied: "His spirit" is at rest. The sentiment is in harmony with the startling utterance—"Ah! I will ease me of mine adversaries; I will avenge me of mine enemies."

The language before us may be regarded as the language of *anticipation*; as is the case with much of the language of prophecy. The chariot with "the *black* horses"—the symbol of desolation and death—was seen to "go forth." The commission was given, and was sure of execution. And the execution should be the righteous God's satisfaction; allaying His indignation—the indignation which was inspired by the treatment of Israel on the part of Babylon. This being

* Comp. chap. i. 15. and Isa. i. 24.

effected, "the *white* go out after them:"* there is peace, a season of tranquillity; and there is, *to Israel*, triumphant gratitude and gladness. Then "the *bay*"—the piebald or dappled—"went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth." By "*the earth*" we should here, I think, understand *the land*; meaning, of course, the land of Judea—Palestine. Their "*seeking to go*" intimates the eagerness of the charioteer, or guiding angel, and of the horses under his guidance, to get permission to do what could be done for the holy land. But they must wait orders. The orders are given; and they are obeyed. Their "*walking to and fro*," or up and down, "in the land," signifies a mixed state of affairs in the territory of Israel for a considerable period:—that, while not free from annoyances and troubles, the people were to enjoy a period of repose and of comparative prosperity. And such was their actual condition. Though harassed by Sanballat, and other chiefs of the Samaritans, and the neighbours who joined with these piqued and jealous enemies,—the appointment of Nehemiah as their governor, along with other advantages,—the fruit of divine favour putting it into the hearts of their deliverers to befriend them,—was their introduction to much of restored spiritual privilege, and to comparative temporal tranquillity and happiness.

The entire vision was thus designed to teach a great general lesson—the lesson of the universal supremacy and superintendence of "the God of Israel" over all the agencies of nature, and all the varying movements of progress or retro-

* The phrase "*after them*," or *behind them*, is considered, however, by an eminent critic as meaning, *geographically, to the west of them*; the preposition *to* being used as in the first and last clauses of the verse; and is interpreted as referring to the successes of Darius in Greece, previous to the battle of Marathon. And "the grisled"—dappled—piebald horses going toward *the south*, (by which is specially signified in Scripture, Egypt, with other countries lying in the same direction in relation to Judea,) is to be understood as signifying the blending in those regions of prosperity and adversity, of peace and war, and the alternate consequences of each. [The reference is to the view of Dr. Henderson.—Ed.]

gression, of prosperity and adversity, of peace and war, amongst the nations; and to teach it with a special application to themselves, as His chosen people, and to those adjoining or more distant countries by which their condition had been, or might hereafter be, beneficially or injuriously affected. It called upon them to put their trust in the wisdom, power, and love of their own Jehovah,—the Governor among the nations:—in one word, to “*have faith in God.*”—Let us learn the lesson. Amidst all the convulsions and revolutions that are agitating Europe, let us not only acknowledge, but rejoice in, the supremacy of the infinitely wise, and good, and mighty. All “the winds” are His. He “holds them in his fist.” The zephyr and the hurricane are alike his agents. All influences—in every department of creation, and in the hearts and wills, the words and actions, of men of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, are under his absolute control. “None can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” Let us trust in Him, own Him, pray to Him,—deprecating, on behalf of our country and of our guilty world, merited wrath,—and imploring, especially, that all events may result in glory to His name.

Verses 9—15. “And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah; then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD. And

they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD; and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”—The visions, properly so called, are ended. What has now been read is not a vision, but a real, though symbolical transaction. In what was to be done, there is no difficulty. He was to take with him, as witnesses of the transaction, certain individuals of the restored captives,—men of some distinction no doubt, whose names are here given. He was to take them to the dwelling-house of another who is also named. He was to take silver and gold, and to make *crowns*: it is not said *how many*, but we shall see reason for restricting the number to *two*—the *priestly* and the *regal* diadems—the former properly pertaining to Joshua, as the high-priest, but not the latter. He was, however, to put both the crowns on Joshua’s head, either the one after the other, or both together, united, in some way, into *one*, the one set above the other,—the sacerdotal supporting the royal. In Jewish practice, in conformity with divine prescription, the two offices had ever been separate. In the person of no individual had they ever been united. Nor was there to be any change in this respect now. Joshua was not to be himself the first exception to the former practice and the former law,—to be both priest and prince,—uniting in himself the two dignities. It was but a temporary and symbolical action. Joshua was, for the time being, a *type*; an emblematical person; the representative of “Him that was to come”—the MESSIAH, in whom the two offices *were* to be united. He was to be a kind of temporary Melchisedec; the only complete type on record, in this respect, of “the Son of God,”—having been at once “priest of the Most High God” and “king of righteousness” and “of peace.” And mark what I cannot but regard as an intended peculiarity in the symbol. It is not the civil ruler that is selected to have the two crowns placed on his head: it is the high-priest. It is the priest that is to wear the regal, not the prince to wear the sacerdotal. This has the important meaning—that it was to be by the execution, to the divine satis-

faction, of his priestly work, that he was to obtain, in reward, his kingly crown. "The sufferings of the Christ" were to precede, and "his glory to follow." The sufferings were expiatory, the voluntary endurance of them a priestly act, for he "offered up himself:" the "glory" was royal—"King of kings, and Lord of lords."

There can be no mistake as to the emblematic import of Joshua's coronation. When it was done, what says the Prophet, in the name and by the command of Jehovah—"Behold the man whose name is the Branch;"—behold him, that is, *in symbol*. We have had this designation of the Messiah before us in one of the former visions;* and we then pointed to parallel passages, in proof that Messiah alone could possibly be intended by it. The best of Jewish and Gentile authorities agree in so understanding the symbol. Assuming, then, its reference to the Messiah, let us briefly notice what is here, in successive particulars, said of him:—

1. "He shall *grow up out of his place*."—In the phraseology there is an allusion to the figurative designation. By some there is supposed to be a reference in the phrase "*from his place*" to the miraculous conception.† But this appears far from what would naturally present itself to any mind. I imagine we shall not be far from the truth, if we consider "his place" as meaning *the earth* to which he came down from heaven—the place of his mediatorial work—the place of his humiliation unto death; and, were it necessary to be still more particular, the grave. It was from the grave that the germination, the sprouting, and spreading, and fruit-bearing, of this Branch properly began. "Except a corn of wheat," said he himself in a similar figure, "fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."‡ Its death is its life. The bulk of the seed, having quickened the germ, corrupts and rots in the soil. But the living germ springs to "the blade," "the ear," and "the full corn in the ear." Thus was the humiliation to death of Messiah his mediatorial life;—the grave itself the place

* Chap. iii. 8.

† So Henderson.—Ed.

‡ John xii. 24.

whence that life sprung, with all its honours and all its abundance of blessing.

2. "He shall *build the temple of the Lord*"—emphatically repeated—"even HE shall build the temple of the Lord."* It is almost needless to say, that the temple thus to be built was not the temple that was then in building. Zerubbabel had founded, and was to finish that temple. And in this, as we formerly saw, he was a type of Him of whom we now speak;—the *building* a type, and the *builder* a type. But the temple here referred to is the *living* temple. It is composed of living stones, built on Christ the living foundation. So says Peter—"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ:"† and Paul—"Ye are God's building. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."‡ And, while Christ is the chief corner-stone in the foundation of this temple,—for "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST,"—He is, at the same time, its divine Builder. He may employ assistant instruments in the work, but without Him not a single stone could ever be added to the spiritual building. No created power could hew these stones from the quarry of nature, and build them, instinct with life, into the rising structure. It is He who, by the divine agency of his own Spirit, adds stone to stone; and He will add the last, as he added the first. Under his superintendence, and by his living and life-giving energy, "the head-stone shall in due time be brought forth with shoutings of "Grace, grace! unto it." And then, in the full import of the terms—

* "The repetition is not," Henderson justly remarks, "to be ascribed, as has been conjectured, to an error of some transcribers; and on the authority of the LXX., Arab. and Syr. to be expunged as superfluous, but is singularly in its place as giving a high degree of emphasis to the statement."—Ed.

† 1 Pet. ii. 4, 5.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 9, 16, 17.

3. "*He shall bear the glory.*" Not that he will not bear it *till* then; but then, the glory, borne by him in its progressive growth, from the beginning, shall be completed. He laid a suitable foundation for the structure in his finished work on earth. And that itself was glory—"Now," said he, in that prospect, "now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him."* He was glorified in his dying, as he then completed a work for which no being in the universe but himself was competent; and then came his reward:—"God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him:"—"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."† The prayer was heard. "Sit thou at my right hand" was the answer. He then "bore the glory." Having "by himself purged our sins, he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."‡—And he "bears the glory" still; and will bear it for ever. He will continue, through eternity, to "bear the glory" of having reared and finished this wondrous structure; which is to be throughout eternity the monument of the Father's "delight in mercy," and of the Son's and the Spirit's power to redeem. Throughout that eternity, HE will be the object of human and angelic adoration!

4. "*He shall sit and rule upon his throne.*" Here is his kingly office—a part of the "glory." The angel Gabriel announced to Mary, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto

* John xiii. 31, 32.

† John xvii. 4, 5.

‡ Phil. ii. 6—11.

him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”* This his reign began, when the prophetic words were fulfilled—“Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”† It is a *mediatorial* reign. He was invested with it by the Father. The Father put the sceptre into his hand, and the “crown of pure gold on his head.” “All power,” said he himself, “*is given* unto me in heaven and on earth.” It is the Father who hath “put all things under his feet;” subjecting this revolted province of His universal empire, with all in the universe that can, in any way, affect its condition, or be made available for reclaiming it to its allegiance, and bringing to final and full salvation the multitude which no man can number. And, as it is a delegated reign, it is a reign of which the sceptre, when all its ends have been accomplished, shall be resigned, and restored to the Father, from whom, for the accomplishment of those ends, it was received:—“But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”‡

5. “*He shall be a priest upon his throne.*” Here is brought out the union of the priestly and kingly offices, of which mention has already been made. He is a priest, not, in this respect, “after the order of Aaron,” but after a still higher and more excellent order—“the order of Melchisedec.” He is a royal priest. While he reigns, he intercedes. He bears

* Luke i. 32, 33.

† Psalm cx. 1.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 23—25.

the censer, as well as the sceptre. "He is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." It is by this union of offices that his power to save is perfected. He obtains for us, by his intercession, all spiritual supplies; and in the exercise of the power intrusted to him, he subdues under his feet all his own enemies and all his people's. And this leads at once to—

6. "*The counsel of peace shall be between them both.*" That is, say critics and commentators of high eminence—and it is the generally prevalent view of the words,—"*between the Father and the Son.*" But without at all questioning the truth of the sentiment thus expressed,—the reality of a covenant agreement between the Father and the Son, for the doing of the work by the latter, and the rewarding of it by the former,—I am disposed to agree with those who think this interpretation at least doubtful. It is not said, "*the covenant of peace,*" but simply "*the counsel of peace;*"—the device of divine wisdom, in the counsels of the infinite mind, for effecting peace. The immediate antecedents to "*them both*" are *the priestly and kingly offices of Christ*. There is no direct mention of the Father and the Son.* "*The counsel of peace*" is "*the glorious Gospel of the blessed God.*" And it is between them both—by the united efficiency of the royal and sacerdotal powers,—that the great ends of this Gospel are accomplished. The reference is *here* to the *two crowns*, the insignia of the two united offices; and it is by the union of these two offices that the great scheme of peace—of reconciliation between God and man, is carried out into full effect."

7. This glory of Messiah, in the union of his offices of king and priest, thus symbolized in the person of Joshua and his two crowns, was to be *held in remembrance* by his servants and people:—"And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of

* "As God speaks," says Datho, "through the whole passage, the affix of the third person (*them*) in שניהם cannot refer to Jehovah." Compare Henderson's note for the authorities on both sides.—ED.

Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the Lord." It is likely that all these are the same persons as were mentioned in the tenth verse—only *Heldai* and *Josiah* in that verse being in this called by the names of *Helem* and *Hen*; it being no unusual thing among the Hebrews for a man to be known by two names. Some have been led to think that because there are *four names*, there must have been *four crowns*,—one for each. But this is a misapprehension, arising from their not adverting to the circumstance, that the crowns were not to be for these men *to wear*, but simply to be "for a memorial in the temple of the Lord." There they were to be laid up, like "Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant." They were to be kept by them; and not them alone, but by all their brethren of the captivity (of whom they were the selected representatives) as pledges of the coming Messiah, and to animate their anticipations of his appearance and work. And surely the *spirit* of this lesson has full, and even stronger, application *to us*. That which was thus brought before their minds by anticipative symbols, has now become, instead of type and prophecy, matter of fact and history. It was said of the Messiah of old by the Father that sent him, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever!" The assurance has been hitherto fulfilled, the engagement faithfully kept; and so shall it be to the end, and through eternity.

8. We have *the calling of the Gentiles, and their participation in the building up of God's spiritual temple*:—"And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord; and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God." There can be no doubt here. "To you who were far off, and to them that were near" are the very terms of distinction between Gentile and Jew, which, in addressing the former, the Apostle uses. "I will bring my sons *from far*," says Jehovah, "and my daughters from the ends of the earth." The Gentiles were to be themselves stones in the building,

and agents in the rearing of it. And this was fulfilled, in "the beginning of the Gospel," in the ministerial activity and usefulness of many a Gentile convert; and it is fulfilling to this day in every Gentile nation where Christianity has found a settlement, and in every heathen country to which missionaries are carrying the message of salvation, and gathering sinners into the Church of God. For that Church of God is His temple (the members of it, how widely soever scattered, being all "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit,") in which "spiritual sacrifices" will be offered to Him—"acceptable through Jesus Christ," in time and for ever!

9. The last thing to be noticed is, the condition on which such promises and assurances would be of any real avail *to them*:—"And *this* shall be, if ye will diligently obey the voice of Jehovah your God." You will observe that here the pronoun "*this*" is a supplement. On this ground, a judicious modern critic* translates: "And it shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God. * * * *"—leaving the sentence unfilled up, and regarding it as a striking example of a figure of speech called by grammarians *aposiopesis*; a figure, that is, by which *emphatic silence* is made to convey an intimation more impressively than if it were put in words. But the use of this figure—if indeed there be any other instance of it in the Bible—being a very rhetorical one, is at any rate a very great rarity with the Scripture writers: and the supplement is perhaps the better, as it is the simpler, mode of rendering. There is a sense in which the assurance was unconditional and absolute. The Messiah was to come, and to execute his work, independently altogether of the character of the Jewish people, and the reception they should give him. But the benefit his coming and work should be to them was conditional. The words—"This shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God," may be understood as particularly referring to those immediately

* Henderson.

preceding—"And ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you." Ye shall know the truth and divinity of my words of prophecy, "if ye diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God." With the large majority of the nation it turned out otherwise. They were "disobedient and rebellious." The spirit of apostasy from Jehovah, not of attachment and subjection to Him, was the spirit which prevailed: and by that spirit "their minds were blinded." The prophets were misunderstood and perverted. Professing to acknowledge the men, they refused and denied their words. Instead of receiving the Messiah, as he had been predicted, and typified, and promised, they "despised and rejected him;" and by this means, "brought upon themselves," not the promised blessings of Messiah's reign and Messiah's priesthood, but "swift destruction."

In "the fulness of the time," "the man whose name is the BRANCH" appeared. He who was then the subject of prediction is now the subject of testimony. He finished his work on earth; he is carrying forward his work in heaven. It is only when, by faith in Him, we have a saving interest in His work on earth, that we can contemplate with any complacency His power and glory in heaven. If we have not such an interest, that power will be our destruction,—that glory our shame. Remember the union of designations under which other prophets besides Zechariah foretold him. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.*" Here is "the man whose name is the BRANCH," in his royalty, and in the security and happiness of his subjects under his reign. And here is the fundamental principle of his spiritual kingdom—the first and most essential truth in the Christian system—He is "JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." This was fulfilled when God

* Jer. xxiii. 5, 6.

“made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Fellow-sinners, is he *your* righteousness? Have you renounced your own, as worthless when tested by God’s law, and in this spirit of self-renunciation, humbly and earnestly sought to be invested with His? To determine the question of your saving interest in Christ, look at the different particulars we have been considering, and try yourselves by each of them. Do you feel any interest in the rearing of that spiritual temple, of which He is at once the foundation and the great Master-Builder? Do you delight in His “bearing the glory,” as more than worthy of it all, and delight in giving Him the glory due unto his name. Are you subject to him as your King—owning His authority, and seeking in everything to know and to do His will? Is His priestly sacrifice, and His priestly intercession your only ground of confidence toward God, and the power of his kingly reign your security for final victory? Do you love to meditate on “the counsel of peace”—“the wisdom of God in a mystery;” and in having that “mystery”—that revealed secret—more and more clearly unfolded to your believing view? Is it your desire and your pleasure to keep up the remembrance of Him to whom you owe so much,—holding sacred every memorial of His work of love? Do you take any part in the building up of His temple? And are you “diligently obeying the voice of the Lord your God?” O never forget, that, profess what you may, you are deriving, and can derive, no benefit from the work of Christ,—either His work on earth, or His work in heaven—if you are not practically godly. For you can give no proof more conclusive that your professed faith in Christ has not justified you, than its not having sanctified you;—no surer evidence of your not having been saved from guilt, than your not having been saved from worldliness and sin.

LECTURE VIII.

ZECH. VII.

“ And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; when they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the Lord, and to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years? Then came the word of the Lord of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Should ye not hear the words which the Lord hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain? And the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against your brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant-stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the Lord of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts: but I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not: thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned; for they laid the pleasant land desolate.”

FROM the beginning of the book we learn that the preceding visions and symbolical actions took place in the eighth month of the *second* year of king Darius. What is recorded in the chapter before us was in the ninth month of the *fourth* year of

the same reign. It was thus somewhat more than two years later. The ninth month—the month CHISLEU, corresponded to the latter part of our November, and the former part of December. We are not from this to suppose, that throughout this long interval the Prophet was unemployed. We cannot doubt that during the whole time, both he and his brother prophet Haggai were “instant in season and out of season;” instructing and encouraging the people; “reproving, rebuking, and exhorting” in the name of Jehovah. It was just during this time,—the time of the building of the house of God—that it is said of them in the book of Ezra, “The elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered, through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and of Zechariah the son of Iddo.”* During these two years, however, no such special revelations were imparted as the Spirit of Jehovah, by whom they were given, saw meet to put on canonical record. The different modes in which divine revelations were imparted,—in which, as it is here again expressed, “*the word of the Lord came*” to the prophets—we endeavoured to explain in the introductory lecture to the Book; and cannot resume the subject now.

Our first inquiry at present must be, What was the *fact* which is here alluded to, as having given occasion for the divine message by the Prophet contained in this chapter? Various are the views taken of it, in consequence of the expressions of the Prophet being critically capable of such different shades of meaning, and from our having no information from any other quarter.—1. The expression, “When *they* had sent”—without any intimation as to *who* they were that sent,—has been understood as equivalent (and unquestionably it often is) to the phrase “when Sherezer and Regem-melech and their men *were sent*,” it not being intended to say *by whom* of the restored captivity.—2. Sherezer and Regem-melech, again, are supposed to have been persons of note still remaining in Chaldea, and “their men” a number of the Israelites who had not returned as yet to the land of their fathers; and are conceived to have sent to Jerusalem, making the inquiry here

* Chap. vi. 14.

mentioned, for the guidance of their own conduct; that is, that they might act in conformity with what was done by their brethren who were now resettled in Jerusalem.—3. You are aware that the word BETHEL, here rendered "*the house of God*," was, at the same time, the name of a *city*—and a city of no small notoriety, although, in some respects, by no means of a very favourable kind. It ought, also, to be noticed that in the original there is no word corresponding to the preposition "*unto*"—where it is said they were sent "*unto the house of God*;" and still further that *Beth-El*, the "*house of God*," is nowhere else, either by this prophet or any of the rest, thus designated, but uniformly "*the house of Jehovah*." On these grounds, *Beth-el* has been construed as the nominative to the verb; and the rendering given, "*When Bethel sent Sherezzer and Regem-melech and their men*:"* by Bethel of course being meant the inhabitants of Bethel, according to a natural and common usage. As this has the recommendation of specifying both the *senders* and the *sent*, it is very likely to be the true state of the case. It is not, however, *certain*; and, like most other things which are not certain, it is not a matter of essential importance.

The message was sent "*to the priests which were in the house of the Lord of Hosts, and to the prophets*." It was the *fourth* year of Darius. But from the fifteenth verse of the sixth chapter of the book of Ezra we learn, that the house "*was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of Darius the king*." It would appear from this, that *parts* of the house were so far finished in succession, as to admit of divine service being performed, and of the residence of the priesthood about the sanctuary; for there was yet two years' work remaining completely to finish it.

What, then, let us next consider, was *the message*, and what *the ends* for which it was sent? The messengers are represented as sent for two purposes—"to bray before the Lord,"

* Henderson.

and to speak to the priests and the prophets about the customary "fasts."

The expression "to pray before the Lord" is, on the margin, "to *entreat the face of the Lord*;" that is, to seek and conciliate Jehovah's favour; and especially, so far as to obtain a divine oracle respecting the inquiry they had to make. What was that inquiry? We have it in verse third: "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?"

From this we learn, first, what was the fact during the period of the captivity. The question relates only to *one* fast; but in the following verses *two* are specified, and in the eighth chapter *four*—"Thus, saith the Lord of hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.*" The fast of the *fourth* month is conceived to have been in commemoration of the breaking down of the wall of Jerusalem; that of the *fifth*, in remembrance of the burning of the temple; that of the *seventh*, of the murder of Gedaliah the son of Ahikam; and that of the *tenth*, of the beginning of the final siege of the city. These various fasts—especially, as would appear from its being here so particularized, "the fast of the *fifth month*"—had been observed by the captives in their exile. They were self-instituted observances. But they are not complained of on this account. Had the *spirit* of them been right; had it been the spirit of "godly sorrow, working the repentance unto salvation not to be repented of," it is not likely that, when they were at a distance from Jerusalem, and precluded from attending on the instituted services of the temple worship, even a ceremonial of their own devising, had it been the expression of such a frame of mind, would have been severely dealt with. We shall see immediately, what was, in this respect, the truth. Meantime we have only to notice, that the inquiry seems to have been made under the impres-

* Chap. viii. 19.

sion, that, although they had thus fasted and humbled themselves during their adversity, there could not be the same reason for continuing the practice, now that they had been rescued from the condition that had called for it, and their peace and prosperity had been restored. Why should they fast—why should they mourn and weep *now*? It appears that for the whole period of seventy years the practice had been regularly kept up: but why should what was done in Babylon continue to be done in Palestine?—to be done, when the very end had been attained, toward which all their fastings pointed, and which they were designed to secure? So far the inquiry was sufficiently natural and reasonable. The entire tenor, however, of the remonstrance which follows in reply, gives us no great reason to think that the spirit by which it was dictated was at all exactly what Jehovah could approve:—

Verses 4—7. “Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me? And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves? Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?” The question of Jehovah is a severely pointed and searching one:—In all these observances of yours “did ye at all fast *unto me, even unto me*?” Was it in compliance with my will?—in obedience to any command of mine? No. The observances were *your own*,—of your own devising and institution. We have said that Jehovah might not have complained of *this*, could another question have been favourably answered—Were they observed in the spirit of *true devotion*?—in the spirit of *penitential sorrow* for the sins that had drawn down upon them God’s displeasure in their long bondage?—in the spirit of “*turning unto Him*,” and seeking His forgiveness and favour, as that which alone could satisfy them,

and make them happy? Alas! no. Their observances were all full of self-righteousness. They were in the spirit of *externalism*; the spirit that imagines multiplied outward observances pleasing to God, and fitted to ensure His regard. And they were in the spirit of *worldliness*. All that their hearts were set upon was their restoration to their own land,—their recovered national independence and special distinctions, and earthly prosperity. It was for *this* they sought the divine favour. Could they but secure this, they desired no more. It was not for Jehovah, but for what Jehovah had given to their fathers, and had promised to restore to their children, that they were concerned. Their fastings and prayers were thus all in the spirit of earthly-minded selfishness. Fain would we think and speak otherwise. But the language of Jehovah here will not allow us. All that we have said appears to be fairly and necessarily included in the question—which is meant to convey a strong negation—"Did ye *at all* fast to me?" He does not even admit a mixture of feeling and of motive. His words imply—it was *not* to me; not *at all* to me. It was entirely selfish.*

And while they did not *fast* to Jehovah, they *feasted* to themselves. They "did eat and drink" to the gratification of their own carnal appetites,—not in the spirit of "doing all to the glory of God;" a duty equally binding under every dispensation. There is a supplement in the sixth verse, occurring twice, of the words "*for yourselves*." It is natural enough, as an antithesis to the words "*unto me*" in the end of the verse preceding. The words have been rendered without the supplement—"And when ye ate, and when ye drank, was it not *ye* that ate, and *ye* that drank?"† The supplement seems better than this. If they ate and drank, who else that ate and drank could it be but themselves? Perhaps, *with a special emphasis*, the words might be simply rendered—"When ye ate, and when ye drank, *did* ye not eat and drink?"—implying that they made the best of it; that eat

* Comp. Is. i. 11—15.

† Henderson.

and drink they did with a plenitude of relish and indulgence—giving full play to their appetites and their tastes;—that if they fasted, they compensated for their fastings,—their feasts being a set-off against their fasts,—their sensual gratifications against their penances! It should here be noticed, that the eating and the drinking specially (though not perhaps exclusively) referred to, is that of their religious festivals. These were days of rejoicing. And on these days, they availed themselves of the calls of religion to “feed themselves without fear.” Thus, both in their fasts and in their feasts the principle of their religion was purely selfish. They fasted for their own safety, and feasted for their own pleasure; but had no regard to the authority and the glory of Jehovah; nor were actuated by either true gratitude or true penitence. Possibly too, the idea may be involved, that even in their captivity God did not allow them to starve. Even in the land of their enemies, they had plenty; although they thought but little of the bountiful Giver, whose goodness was so unmerited; and who “punished them less than their iniquities deserved.”

The *seventh* verse is unnecessarily supplemented with the words—(which, had they been meant, could hardly by possibility have been omitted) “*Should ye not hear.*” It is better, because both more literal and more appropriate,—“*Are not these the words*” which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?” The meaning evidently is, that Zechariah was far from being the first by whom they and their fathers had been thus addressed; that the same had been the style of expostulation and admonition employed in all their past history, by every prophet whom Jehovah had commissioned. Thus too spoke Jeremiah:—“From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, (that is the three and twentieth year,) the word of the LORD hath

come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: and go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt."* And not only had all the successive prophets used the language of admonition and reproof; but they had testified in the strongest terms the worthlessness of all merely outward observances, while the heart was kept back from God, and "the weightier matters of the law" were disregarded, and His will in them despised and violated. The spirit of their addresses had ever been—"To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."†

It is here, moreover, implied, that such assurances and such warnings were not addressed to them only in the times of their adversity; but that they were so admonished amid their highest "*prosperity*," with the view of preventing the abuse of that prosperity, to which they were so sadly prone; and so saving them from the judicial punishment of their ungrateful forgetfulness and rebellion. This renders the words very appropriate to the spirit of the inquiry; which evidently was—We fasted in adverse circumstances; are we to continue to fast when circumstances are prosperous? We fasted when in bondage; are we to fast in freedom? We fasted when under the hand of our enemies; are we to fast, now that we have been delivered from their power? So far as the mere outward observance of "the fast of the fifth" or of any other month was concerned, it was of little moment. But as soon as God

* Jer. xxv. 3—7.

† Comp. Isa. lxvi. 1—3; also Jer. vii. 21—24; Amos v. 21—27, &c.

had delivered them from the visitation of His long-threatened and at length executed displeasure, were they to forget the lesson of humiliation and contrition which the visitation had been designed to teach? If they had fasted in a right spirit, that spirit would not so soon have evaporated. They would have kept in remembrance the judgment, and their own and their fathers' sins as the guilty cause of it. They would have had the *facts* of the various seasons referred to associated with their respective commemorations. Their eagerness to dispense with the fasts arose from indisposition to keep in view either the fasts, or what had led to them, or the temper of mind becoming them. "The Lord had cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was in prosperity;" and when "the south and the plain"—the southern and western parts of Judah—abounded with inhabitants. And their disregard of His warnings and entreaties; their being "lifted up" by their "prosperity,"—abusing God's long-suffering goodness, and going astray "after the sight of their own eyes, and the imaginations of their own hearts," were the very causes of the seventy years' visitation from which the recovery of the nation had, in returning kindness, and unfailing faithfulness to covenant promise, been just effected. This, in a more general form, is the lesson of all that follows: for it must be observed that the verb "*speakeeth*" in the ninth verse, ought without question to be understood in the *past* sense, and to be rendered *spake*.* There is no violence in this. The one rendering is as legitimate as the other. And the whole subsequent context imperatively demands it:—especially the *eleventh* verse, "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear;" and the *thirteenth* verse shows that Jehovah is accounting by a reference to *past character* for *recent facts*—for the judgments from which they had just been delivered—"But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not: thus the land was

* So also Henderson.—Ed.

desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned; for they laid the pleasant land desolate."

Taking it thus, mark the preceptive admonitions; and the manner in which they were treated:—"Thus *spake* the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his Spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts." The admonitions have special relation to evils which specially abounded. They are admonitions to the practice of reciprocal *righteousness* and *mercy*, as the best tests of subjection to God:—the *righteousness* being the maintenance of impartiality in all judgment, whether of a public and official kind, or in matters of a more private nature between man and man; the *mercy* including universal compassion and tender sympathy for human suffering, and for those, especially, whom Jehovah many a time represents, in the very strongest terms, as the objects of His peculiar patronage—the widow and the fatherless, the poor and the stranger: and, at the same time, the ready forgiveness of injuries—not meditating revenge; not brooding over wrongs; not seeking opportunities and methods "of requiting evil with evil;" but in all things acting up to the royal law—the law of LOVE. When thus admonished, what was the conduct of their fathers, and of *some* among themselves? The expressions describing it are varied and strong. The first is general—"They *refused to hearken*;" they would not pay any serious attention. The second is stronger—"They *pulled away the shoulder*;" (rendered by one translator "*turned the back*;" though it seems rather to refer to the case of one, on whose shoulder we lay our hand, when he is reluctant to listen to us, in order to arrest and

beseech him to hear, but he fretfully and violently “draws the shoulder” from our kind and earnest grasp.) The third is stronger still—“They *stopped their ears* that they should not hear.” Thus, while we pursue the man whom we wish to reclaim and to save, raising the voice of our earnest entreaty, he takes the last resource of determined obstinacy, pressing both his hands upon his ears, to exclude the very sound of our words. And all this was only the outward manifestation of what was within—the *state of the heart*; a state which, at the same time, it served to confirm and increase:—“yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone.” This was their own doing, not God’s. If God’s dealings were so perverted and abused by them as to conduce to this hardening of the heart, it was neither their intention nor their tendency. His goodness should have made them grateful; and their gratitude should have animated them to obedience and active service—strengthening their hands, and winging their feet, for the doing of His will, and the advancement of His glory. And His righteous and corrective visitations ought to have impressed them with a sense of their guilt, and brought them to His feet in penitent confession and in a spirit of renewed determination to cleave to Him thenceforward in faith, and love, and entire self-consecration. When both prosperity and adversity—mercy and judgment—hardened them alike, whose was the blame? Not God’s surely. When they presumptuously said—“The way of the Lord is not equal,” good reason had Jehovah to reply, “O house of Israel, are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?” When, with, if possible, still greater presumption, they said, “If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live?”—as if their state were without remedy, and they could not help it—what says Jehovah to the prophet? “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way, and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?” It is true, that God is sometimes spoken of as “hardening the heart.” But it

is neither by any direct influence, nor even by treatment of which the proper tendency is to produce any such effect. All that is, or can be, meant by such expressions is, that God leaves the heart to its own native and acquired hardness; "giving men up to their own hearts' lusts, and letting them walk," unhindered and unrestrained, "in their own counsels." We have clear proof of this in the case of *Pharaoh*: Pharaoh's sinfully hardening his own heart was the fulfilment, we are distinctly told, of *what the Lord had said*, when He declared—"I will harden Pharaoh's heart." God thus hardened Pharaoh's heart, when Pharaoh hardened his own. God represents himself as doing what he does not prevent; or as doing what is only the result of men's sinful abuse of what He does.* What was the case with Pharaoh was the case with the unbelieving and rebellious Jews. It was they themselves that, by abusing God's words and God's ways, "made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the words which the Lord sent by his Spirit, through the prophets."†

And this was the reason for the divine displeasure against them:—"Therefore was there great wrath upon them from the Lord." This *great wrath* is described, in its practical execution, in the *last verse*:—"I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not: thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned; for they laid the pleasant land desolate." The terms refer to the recent seventy years' desolation of "that pleasant land"—the "land of desire," or "of delights;" the "good land; the land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that sprang out of valleys and hills; the land of wheat and barley and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; the land of oil-olive, and honey; the land wherein they did eat bread without scarceness, lacking nothing in it; the land whose

* Comp. Exod. iv. 21, and chap. vii. 3, with chap. ix. 34, and 35, and especially chap. viii. 15. And for the full discussion of the subject the reader is referred to the Author's Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans, vol. ii. pp. 265—270.—ED.

† Comp. Isa. xxx. 8—13.

stones were iron, and out of whose hills they dug brass;”* the land of divine selection, divine promise, and divine gift, to them and to their fathers. That land was laid desolate; left to “enjoy her sabbaths” in the peace of solitude—undecorated by the profanations of unbelief, rebellion, and idolatry. The entire procedure of Jehovah toward Israel was in full harmony with his character as proclaimed by himself—“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth.” His language by Hosea sets him forth in all the touching tenderness of his compassion,—ever backward to smite, ever forward to bless: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.”†

Let us now just notice—*The righteous principle of divine retribution*:—verse 13. “Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of hosts.” The very terms carry at once to every mind the impression of unimpeachable rectitude. The language resembles that in which God addressed Israel in the days of the Judges;‡ where, after referring to past deliverances wrought for them, he says—“Yet ye have forsaken me, and served other gods: wherefore I will deliver you no more. Go and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.” Would not they have had themselves to blame, had God thus left them to find help, as they best could, from “the vanities and things of nought”—to trust in which they had forsaken Him? For no desert of theirs was it, but according to the abundance of His mercy, that He relented (v. 16.) “*His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel.*—But all God’s judgments on His ancient people were dictated and regulated

* Deut. viii. 7—9.

† Hos. xi. 8, 9.

‡ Judges x. 13, 14.

by this righteous principle. To this their present condition must be traced, as well as every preceding visitation. And times of mercy yet await them. There will be another relenting. "The veil shall be take away;" and, "looking unto Jesus," they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" They shall "turn to the Lord," saying, "Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render to thee the calves of our lips:" and He will "receive them graciously, and love them freely." He will "turn away his anger from them," and be again "as the dew unto Israel."

This principle applies universally—to all who have the opportunity of hearing God's voice, in whatever way He speaks to them. And the righteousness which is essentially in the principle will be equally apparent in the modification of its sentences according to the amount of distinctness and clearness with which the voice of God speaks to men. This is very various. God speaks to the HEATHEN. He speaks by His *works*; and He speaks by the *dictates of conscience*. Were any found learning the lessons taught, and following the intimations of duty given—acting sincerely and humbly, up to the light enjoyed, they would be judged, not according to a revelation they did not and could not possess, but according to the means of knowledge of truth and duty actually enjoyed; and such, (I speak hypothetically and of abstract principles only, not of facts, or of the application of the principles, which belongs to God alone)—doubtless, would, through the merits of an unknown Saviour, find mercy. On the other hand—"as many as have sinned without law shall perish without law." They shall "*perish*;" but it will be "*as those who have sinned without law*:"—that is, their perdition shall be incomparably less fearful than that of those who have enjoyed the clearer light, and have listened to the fuller and more interesting lessons of God's word.* The JEWS

* For further illustration of this deeply interesting theme the reader may consult the Author's Lectures on Romans, vol. i. pp. 156—170; and more especially his work entitled 'Discourses on Man's Responsibility for his Belief.' ED.

who lived, again, under the old economy, had committed unto them the oracles of God ;” but what they had was only a part of those oracles—the introductory part,—comparatively dark, the truth made known, and yet concealed,—shrouded for the time under type, and prophecy, and promise. In not hearing God’s voice, as *thus* addressing them by the words and writings of those “holy men, who spoke” and wrote “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” they were unspeakably more guilty than the Heathen: so that, in a tone of still heavier denunciation, God could say to *them*, if they hardened their hearts, and would not hear and obey His voice,—“I called, and *ye* would not hear; so now, when you call, *I* will not hear.” And if to Heathens and to Jews He could say this in righteousness, how much more decidedly righteous will be the application of the principle to those who have in their hands a completed revelation!—who sit under the sound of Gospel mercy!—to whom “God who, at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath spoken BY HIS SON!” Sinners, you hear God inviting you—warning you of the fearful consequences of rejecting or disregarding the invitation, and holding out to you the assurance of “fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore” as the result of compliance with it. Salvation, in all its present and eternal blessings, is thus placed within your reach. It is yours, if you will but have it on God’s terms. What, then, will you say in arrest of judgment, or even in mitigation of it, should you hear the words, at last, sounded in your ears—“AS I CALLED, AND YE WOULD NOT HEAR, SO MAY YE NOW CALL, AND I WILL NOT HEAR?” Will not conscience respond to the rectitude of the sentence? Yes. There will not be in all hell a conscience that will not attest to the sufferer the justice of his doom. *This* will be “the worm that dieth not.” It is a mitigation of suffering—a mitigation which when we are evil-entreated by fellow-men, we feel to be exquisitely sweet and beyond estimation precious—to possess the inward testimony that it is unrighteous and unmerited. No such mitigation will there be of any suffering inflicted by the sentence of God on impenitent

sinners. They will feel, and feel for ever, that they have been their own destroyers. No power of self-delusion will exist there, to drive from their consciences this conviction. There will be no metaphysical subtleties there—no materialism—no fatalism—no speculations on abstract principles of responsibility, to shift the blame from self to God. Now, then, O sinner, hear his voice, and “harden not your heart.” It is not yet too late. God still calls. God still waits. Can you persist in trusting to a *future* moment, which to you may never arrive?—or can you be so presumptuous as to imagine, that when you have spent the whole of life on self, and on self merely as the creature of earth and of a day, without regard to God—to His authority as your rule, to His glory as your end, to His grace as that which alone, through Christ, can save you,—*He* should be satisfied with a selfish—“*God be merciful!*” at the close?—that, when you have run it out to its very dregs in sin, and worldliness, and neglect of both His law and His gospel, these dregs should suffice for atonement? O what *will* you—what *can* you say, when a long-insulted God—insulted to the very last—and *at* the last the most by such an imagination—will say to you—“Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: they would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof: therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”*

* Prov. i. 24—31.

LECTURE IX.

ZECH. VIII.

“Again the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the Lord, I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called, A city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, The holy mountain. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built. For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour. But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the Lord of hosts. For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things. And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong. For thus saith the Lord of hosts, As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the Lord of hosts, and I repented not; so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do, Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgments of truth

and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the Lord. And the word of the Lord of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you."

THIS chapter may be considered as a continuation of the preceding one. In order to the clear understanding of part of its contents, it may not be amiss to notice very briefly some of the "times and seasons" connected with the return from the captivity in Babylon. These we have to gather from the books of Ezra, Esther, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah. But in reading these books as they stand in our Bibles, we are very apt to lose sight of the relation in which they stand to one another in regard to *time*. Without entering into comparative estimates of different schemes of chronology, we place the decree of Cyrus, by which liberty was given to the Jews to return to Jerusalem and Judea, agreeably to the common reckoning, about the year before Christ 536. In the former part of the Book of Ezra, (assuming *him* to have been the writer of the entire book) we have an account of the decree, and of the number and conditions of those who, under the conduct of Zerubbabel, were the first to avail themselves of it, and to make their way back to the land of their fathers. He tells us also of the rebuilding of the temple; which, we learn from Haggai, was set about at the first with no great spirit of zeal, and union, and perseverance, and was interrupted and abandoned from a selfish solicitude regarding their own personal and domestic accommodation; but which, by the divine chastisements for this, and the reproofs, exhorta-

tions, and encouragements of himself and Zechariah in the name of Jehovah—was resumed with greater alacrity and brought to its completion. This was about twenty years from the time of the first return on the decree of Cyrus. The delay had arisen, not solely from the lethargy of the Jews, but from the interruption of their work by their enemies, and the influence used by them with the kings of Persia, until the decree of Cyrus was discovered by Darius Hystaspes, and orders were given by that prince for its speedy execution, and for assistance towards this from the royal bounty. It was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius that the temple was finished. But, while Ezra records these things, they were before his time. In the beginning of the seventh chapter of his Book he informs us of the *time* of *his* coming from Babylon to Jerusalem. It was in the seventh year of the reign of Artaxerxes—that is, as is generally understood, Artaxerxes Longimanus. This, then, was about *fourscore years* from the proclamation of Cyrus; and consequently sixty years from the time when the temple was finished. During that period, it would appear, nothing specially worthy of record had taken place in Jerusalem. We learn, however, from the reformatations effected by Ezra, that there had been among the returned Jews more of declension than of progress in what was good,—in adherence to the worship of Jehovah according to the due order, and the injunctions of Jehovah respecting their separation from the Heathen around them, and the evils arising from their intermingling with them by marriage and otherwise. But although nothing very remarkable in the shape of *events* had taken place during that period in Judea, it was not so elsewhere. For to this period—just preceding the arrival of Ezra,—the incidents in the Book of Esther have their place, so full of interest to the Jewish people, as well as of instruction respecting the ways of God's providence. The Ahasuerus of that book is, by the best authorities, and in harmony with both the Septuagint and Josephus, conceived to have been the same with the Artaxerxes of Ezra:—and it is more than probable, that the Jews owed the commission given both to Ezra and afterwards to

Nehemiah, to the influence of the queen Esther, herself a Jewess, with that monarch. The commission of Nehemiah, who was cup-bearer to the king (a post of honour, intimacy, and influence in the palace) was later than that of Ezra by about thirteen years. So that between the issuing of the decree of Cyrus and the arrival of Nehemiah at Jerusalem there was not much less than a century; and some chronologers, indeed, reckon it somewhat more than even that time. Yet, what do we find the state of things at Jerusalem, even at that distant date?—"It came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach; the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire."* This led him to mourn, and fast, and pray. The king saw his sadness. The cause was asked—in presence of the queen; and the explanation given. Hence his commission, and the favour shown by the king towards its object. And he found the case as it had been reported to him. On going up he made a private survey; and he records his report to the priests and nobles and rulers—"Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work."† And we have in chapter seventh another statement respecting the population and the still extensive desolateness of the city. "Now the city was large and great; but the people were few therein, and the houses were not builded."‡ The words do

* Neh. i. 1—3.

† Neh. ii. 17, 18.

‡ Neh. vii. 4.

not mean, of course, that *no* houses were builded; for it had been one of God's early complaints, that *His* house was allowed to lie waste, while they "ran every man to *his own* house:" but the buildings were in proportion to the smallness of the population; those who had, whether with Zerubabel or subsequently, come up, not, of course, having *all* settled in the city, but dispersed themselves, according to the localities of their fathers, through other parts of the land. Thus, it was twenty years from the edict of Cyrus ere the temple was built; and it was sixty years after that when Ezra and his company went up, and from twelve to fifteen years after that that Nehemiah and *his* company went up: and such was the state of Jerusalem still. Now, it was during the early period—the first twenty years—the time of the building of the temple—that Zechariah and Haggai officiated in their prophetic office. It was *then* that the promissory declarations were uttered contained in this and the preceding chapters. The bearing of this will be manifest. The declarations could hardly be considered as having *begun* to be fulfilled.

Proceed we now to the contents of the chapter; premising one general remark. Some interpret *the whole chapter* as having had its fulfilment entirely in the subsequent history of the Jewish people antecedently to "the fulness of time," and the commencement of the Gospel era. We cannot but regard the language of the latter part of the chapter as by much too strong to admit of this; and are disposed to explain the former portion of it as receiving its accomplishment before Christ; and the latter, as we have found the case in previous instances, as stretching forward into Gospel times, and partly into times even yet to come.

The first thing that comes before us is, a general assurance of Jehovah's favourable regard to His people and to their city and land, with promised manifestations of that regard:—"Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury. Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion,

and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain."

There are commentators, as Blayney and Scott, who would render verse second, "I am jealous," or *zealous*, (for the two terms in this connexion are of equivalent import) "*against* Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous against her with great fury." And the immediate mention of his *returning* to Zion, connected with the previous reference to His visitation of judicial displeasure,* might seem to give this rendering plausibility. But the received rendering—which is retained by critics of equal or higher eminence†—is more in accordance with the idiom of the original language; and the words appear to correspond in meaning with those in the first chapter—"And the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy. And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction."‡ What is expressed in *both* passages is—zeal *for* Zion *against* her enemies. And this had now been manifested in the restoration of His people to their own dwelling-place.

There is an obvious connexion between the first and the second clauses of verse third—the connexion, namely, between Jehovah's return to Jerusalem, and again dwelling there, and the character and designations of the city. It would become what it had been before. It was the city which God had "chosen to put his name there." It was there He had established His worship, in contradistinction to the prevailing idolatry of the world. There was mount Zion. There were the temple, the ark, the mercy-seat, and all the memorials of His power and goodness in the past history of Israel. It was the "CITY OF TRUTH." It was there that God's truth was revealed by those "holy

* Chap. vii. 13, 14.

† Henderson and others. The Hebrew is לעצור.—ED.

‡ Chap. i. 14, 15.

men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" and of whose prophetic commission "the testimony of Jesus" was "the spirit." And through their inspired instrumentality, were "committed" to the chosen people "the Oracles of God." Perhaps, too, by "a city of truth" may be meant, what Jerusalem is elsewhere called, "the *faithful* city;" whose professed attachment to Jehovah should be sincere, and not hypocritical; "not in word only nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." "And the mountain of the Lord of Hosts"—the mountain on which stood "the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High," where He "dwelt between the cherubim," accepting the propitiatory homage, and sending forth His blessing—should be again called "the holy mountain;"—holy, as the dwelling-place of the Holy One; holy, as the object of devout veneration, and the place of sacred worship—"the beauty of holiness." And, while divine worship, in connexion with all its spiritual privileges and blessings, was to be restored, there was, at the same time, to be the enjoyment of that *temporal prosperity* which, under the old Covenant, was so often promised to faithful obedience:—verses 4, 5. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts: There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." Here is a fine picture. The scene is the streets of Jerusalem. For it is clear, that in this connexion, the word rendered "*dwell*" is decidedly to be understood as meaning "*sit*."*—*Longevity*, when in any country it is found on a more than ordinary average, is a proof of a healthful and prosperous condition of society: and, although I am satisfied that some passages of Scripture which have been interpreted of personal longevity have reference rather to the long-continued national possession of the land of promise,—yet that longevity is included amongst the promises of temporal blessing and well-being, there can be little doubt.

* The primary sense of the original term יָשָׁב.—ED.

"Thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel," is one of not a few similar assurances.—The state described is one of peace and tranquil security and fearlessness; when age sits in the streets, resting the weight of its years on its supporting staff, and yet looking fresh and happy under it; and when childhood and youth enjoy there their cheerful sports. The scene is full of interest. You see it before you. The little boys and girls gambolling in all their buoyant and sprightly glee: and their old grandsires and grandames, while they hold their more sober communings one with another, looking on, and enjoying the mirth of those dear little folks that have not yet begun to feel the burden of life's cares. The man is to be pitied and shunned, that has no liking to children. I would hardly trust him:—or, if I might in a matter of mere justice, I would not in a matter that required feeling or heart. What complacency could one have in him who would rebuke, with a growl of impatient sternness, the ringing laugh of boyish merriment, or angrily drive from him the tribe of little girls, when they run, their little hearts dancing in frolicksome delight, to tell him of their joys. The man who can so far forget his own childhood as to have no sympathy with childhood now, may be set down as a misanthrope, and compassionated accordingly. The sports of childhood—*innocent sports* in their own nature of course—are the very instincts of that period of life: and they have here the sanction of a benevolent God, being a part of His promised blessing to His favoured city. Who would like to be the man, or the woman, the sight of whom frightened such a group?

We have next a ground of assurance to doubting and desponding minds:—verse 6. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts." Such doubting and desponding spirits there had been, and were. The thing was "marvellous in their eyes." How was it ever to be? Much time had passed; and nothing like it had yet been realized. But whatever were the doubts, and whence soever arising, there

was no reason why that should be marvellous in God's eyes which was marvellous in man's. Well may He smile at the incredulity of creatures who think and speak as if they judged of Him by themselves. What is there, in nature, in providence, or in redemption, that has not in it something that is marvellous in *our* eyes? But to infinite power and infinite wisdom *wonder* can have no existence. In how many things, to the questionings and doubtings of creatures, must the answer be—"With men it is impossible; but with God all things are possible." This is to be said of much more marvellous things than the one before us. And it was strange, that, among a people who had amongst them the records of all the "mighty deeds" done for them by the finger of Jehovah in the days of their fathers, there should have existed the slightest surmise of impossibility, or even of difficulty, in regard to any assurance of good coming from HIM! On many occasions was the incredulity both of individuals in what regarded themselves, and of the community in what regarded the public interests, met with a similar rebuke: "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"

On this ground, the assurance is renewed:—verses 7, 8. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness." Here we find interpreters differing. Lowth understands the words *generally*, as meaning "the restoration of the Jewish nation *from their several dispersions*;" and "the west country" as "having a special reference to their *present* dispersions, great numbers of them having settled in the western parts of the world." And Dr. Henderson admits that "were there any reason to believe that the prophecy has respect to a restoration of the Jews yet future, there would be a singular propriety in the reference to the setting of the sun, or the west,"—"the Jews being now, for the most part, found in countries to the west of Jerusalem." Another commentator says—"The passage, in its full import, must be interpreted, either of the Chris-

tian Church, or the future restoration of the Jews." It does seem to me, however, a highly improbable thing that, in holding out present encouragement to the Jewish people, that encouragement should be entirely, or almost entirely, drawn not from any prospects to be realized at the time by themselves and their immediate posterity, but from what was to take place after the intervention of a period of dispersion incomparably longer than that from which they had just been delivered! For that the promise here relates to the *literal Jerusalem* the context seems to put beyond a doubt. On *this* part of the prophecy, then, I concur in Dr. Henderson's judgment:—"The east and west are here put as parts for the whole. The meaning is, I will deliver my people from every region whither they have been scattered:" and when he adds—"There is every reason to conclude, that it has an exclusive reference to what took place soon after it was delivered." Even the vast numbers that were carried captive by Ptolemy,* after the time of Alexander, and settled in different parts of Egypt, themselves serve to show the large amount of population to which the city had then reached. Thus far I would go in applying the prophecy to times then near; though the stronger terms of the close of the chapter require our looking farther forward, and taking in a wider range.

The re-establishment of the relation between Jehovah and His chosen people is a frequently repeated promise, if indeed that relation should at all be regarded as having been broken off during the period of seeming desertion; any more than a father's relation to his son can be regarded as broken off during the time that he is chastising him for disobedience, and putting him in temporary seclusion and disgrace.—When it is promised "They shall be my people, and I will be their God, *in truth and righteousness*;"—the words "*in truth and righteousness*" ought to be considered as applying to both sides of the relation. *His* part of that relation, sustained from the time of His having chosen them, had been

* Not less, it is said, than a hundred thousand.—ED.

always thus characterized." Not so *theirs*. They called God *their God*, and themselves *His people*; while too often it was neither "in truth" nor "in righteousness;" but when their hearts and lives gave the lie to their lips; when they flagrantly played the hypocrite, and defrauded Him of his due, both in inward devotion and in outward service.

O let *us* see to it, that *our* professions of having God for *our* God and *our* Father, be "in truth and righteousness;" that our hearts be "right with Him, and steadfast in His covenant;" that we act as His children, "in simplicity and godly sincerity"—"Israelites indeed in whom there is no guile." What says Jehovah to *us*—even to *us*?—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.*

The next few verses, from the ninth to the fifteenth, are promissory and cheering; fitted and designed to animate the builders, and stir them to zeal and persevering diligence. The language accords exactly with that of Haggai respecting Jehovah's displeasure at their apathy in *His* work and selfish eagerness in their own, and the way in which this displeasure was expressed,—by vain, unrequited toil and fruitless seasons.† "*Before these days*," in verse tenth, refers to the time previous to *the laying of the foundation of the temple* spoken of in verse ninth: and the words, "*But now*" in the eleventh verse to the change that took place when they set about the work of God in earnest—

* 2 Cor. vi. 14—18.

† See in Hag. i. 2—6; ii. 15—19.

"*from that day* He blessed them." Famine, and internal dissension had been the cause of much suffering:—for to these calamities perhaps, rather than to annoyance from their enemies without, the words in the end of the tenth verse, "I set all men every one against his neighbour," refer, inasmuch as it was rather *subsequently* to the commencement of the building of the temple that their external foes began specially to harass and hinder them. And the terms are very strong in verse twelfth, which describes the reverse—the change from famine to fulness, from affliction to prosperity: "For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things."

The language in the thirteenth verse is somewhat ambiguous: "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing." What is meant by "*being a curse among the heathen*" on the one hand, and "*being a blessing*" on the other?—Does it mean that they were a curse *to* the heathen by the influence of their evil example? I would, in the present instance, answer decidedly *No*. They are not said to have been a curse *to* them, but a curse *among* them: and this may still have one or other of two meanings. It may mean that they were the *objects* of cursing, whereas now they were to be the objects of blessing; to be blessed *by* them as they had been cursed *by* them. Or it may mean, that, as they had been the *model* (if I may so express myself) of a curse, they should now be the *model* of a blessing:—that is, that, as others, in wishing evil, wished it *according to what they suffered*, so now, in wishing good, they should wish it *according to what they enjoyed*. The sentiment may be illustrated by a similar case: "And he blessed them that day, saying, In thee shall Israel bless, saying, God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh: and he set Ephraim before Manasseh."* Thus Ephraim and Manasseh were to be the *mo-*

* Gen. xlviii. 20.

del of blessing. And such Jehovah engages His people should be among the heathen, when the fruits of His favour and blessing came to be seen upon them. And upon this engagement He founds the encouraging admonition in the close of the verse:—"Fear not, but let your hands be strong."

Before remarking on this, we may merely notice, in passing, the union, in this verse, of "*the house of Judah and the house of Israel.*" We often hear of the inquiry—What has become of *the ten tribes*? All attempts to find them have been vain. But what if, at the return from captivity, there was a reunion? What if "*the house of Israel*" were brought back from their dispersion at that juncture, as well as the house of Judah from theirs? *If so*, the search for the ten tribes must, as a matter of course, be fruitless; and a good reason will thus be furnished for their never having been discovered, and for all conjectures having ended in disappointment. But more of this on a future occasion.

When Jehovah says, "FEAR NOT," he, in almost every instance, accompanies the injunction with a reason: and we may be sure, that a divinely assigned reason cannot fail to be a satisfactory one. For instance, "Fear not; *for I am with thee.*" Can there be a better reason for banishing fear than that? Again, "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine." Again, "He it is that shall go with thee: he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee; fear not nor be discouraged." Who could fear, believing this? "If God be for us, who *can* be against us?" And there is a close connexion between the two parts of the admonition, "Fear not—let your hands be strong." The "*hands*" can never be "strong," when the heart is feeble: and feeble it must ever be, when it is oppressed by fear. When the spirit is thus timid, trembling, irresolute, "*the hands hang down.*" There is an exhaustion of all *energy*, whether bodily or mental. But confidence in God, divesting the heart of all such enfeebling tremor, braces up the energies of both mind and body: as Nehemiah said to the same class of persons whom Zechariah

here addresses, or their immediate descendants—"Be ye not sorry; FOR THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH.

To impress more deeply the same admonition, and give it the surer and the more thorough efficiency in producing the desired ardour and activity, Jehovah gives them the further assurance:—"As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not: so again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not." The visitation of punishment for their sins, so often threatened against their fathers, and long suspended in merciful forbearance, did at length come down. They would not hear, and take warning, and by seasonable penitence and reformation, turn away the lingering vengeance. They were then made to *feel* it; made sensible that God's denunciations were not *mere words*. And the faithfulness of God to His threatenings is here used to encourage confidence in His *promises*. He who is true to the one will be no less true to the other. If God "repented not" of His "thoughts of evil," we may rest assured He will not repent of His thoughts of good. Far less will He: for He "delighteth in mercy." In the first chapter we have an appeal of a similar kind:—"But my words, and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us."* As, then, God's words had "taken hold of their fathers" in threatened punitive visitation, so would His words of promise "take hold" of themselves, to do them good. On this ground the exhortation is repeated—"FEAR NOT." All that God is, and all that God has, are alike pledged, in the promises of His covenant, to do good to His confiding and obedient people. I say, confiding and obedient; for observe, the promise is not *absolute*, but *conditional*. God has given no absolute promises of blessing—promises, of which the fulfilment is independent of faith and

* Chap. i. 6.

were ended." Their fastings—commemorative of their past woes—were now, therefore, to cease. They were now to "eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions to those for whom nothing was prepared:" and, wiping the tears of sorrow from their eyes, to rejoice that they were now again by JORDAN'S instead of BABEL'S streams; and, in the strength inspired by "the joy of the Lord," were to do, diligently and perseveringly, the Lord's work.

But mark again the practical improvement:—"Therefore, love the truth and peace." The words may be taken in two senses: First, as an appeal to *gratitude*; as if Jehovah had said, "You owe your deliverance to ME. You deserved it not. You never could have wrought it for yourselves. It is all my doing. If, therefore, you feel, as you ought, thankful to your covenant God for my interposing on your behalf, think of my will, and henceforward attend to what you know will be pleasing in my sight: 'love the truth and peace.'" Secondly, as an appeal to *self-love*—an appeal grounded on a regard to *their own interests*: as if He had said, "You have been suffering for your own and your fathers' sins. You have been delivered. If you would shun a repetition of the sufferings; if you would continue in possession of your now restored land and liberty, and temporal and spiritual blessings—'love the truth and peace.' Love them in heart: show love to them in practice. It is thus only that you can retain my favour and blessing; thus only that your days can be prolonged upon the land which the LORD your God has again given you."

The remaining portion of the chapter, as already hinted, I cannot but regard as looking forward to more distant times. "Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass,

that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”* The general subject of these verses—to which alone we can at present advert—is the amount of favour and honour to be shown to the Jews by the inhabitants of other countries, and of solicitude to obtain a participation in their peculiar privileges and blessings. The question is, Was there anything amounting to what is here expressed, or at all approaching to it, during the immediately succeeding period of Jewish history; or, to take the longest period—previous to the Christian era? Mark the strength and comprehensiveness of the expressions:—those that are to “*come*” are “peoples;”† “the inhabitants of many cities,” stirring one another up, as to a matter of duty and of deep and common interest;—“many peoples and strong” or mighty “nations;” “ten” for one “out of all the languages of the nations”—that is, of nations of all languages. They are to flock to Jerusalem; and that, not for secular but for spiritual purposes—“to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts.” And they are to assume the attitude of entreaty and dependance, as those who cannot get the blessing they want otherwise than through the medium of the Jew, and by making common cause and common interest with him—“saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you.” I can find nothing in the history of the Jews between the captivity and Christ, to which such terms as these can be applied without straining and extravagance. Take, for instance, the comment of Dr. Henderson, who applies the language entirely to that period:—“Jerusalem was the place which Jehovah had chosen to put his name there; and thither all his true worshippers were expected to come to the great festivals, in whatever country they might reside. Thus, the treasurer of Candace went all the way from Abyssinia—Acts viii. 27; and thus numbers from all parts of the Roman Empire assembled in that city at the first Pentecost

* Verses 20—23.

† Plural in the original עַמִּים.—Ed.

after our Saviour's resurrection. As the Hellenistic Jews and the Gentile proselytes travelled along in companies, they could not but excite the curiosity of the pagans through whose countries and cities they passed: and, celebrated as the metropolis of Judea had become for the favours conferred upon it by some of the greatest monarchs of the times immediately gone by, and for the prosperity and warlike prowess of the Jewish people, it was impossible that it should not attract the attention of the surrounding nations to the character and claims of the God who was there adored, and who accorded such blessings to his worshippers." This is making the most of the materials to be had. The eunuch of Ethiopia was an individual only. Those who crowded to Jerusalem on the great Pentecost are called "devout Jews out of every nation under heaven." As to the number of Gentile proselytes who accompanied them, nothing whatever is said,—not so much as whether there were any. And the rest is not fact, but conjecture; how likely soever, still only conjecture. Now surely there is nothing in this that *at all* comes up to the representation before us—or at all approaches it. On this account I am constrained to adopt the ordinary interpretation of the passage, as having reference to Gospel times, and even, in part, to times of the Gospel dispensation yet to come; and as expressing the obligations to be felt and owned by the whole world—by "men of every kindred and people and nation and tongue"—to the Jews, for the knowledge, the worship, and the practice, of true religion. "Salvation was of the Jews." All the true religion in the world before "the fulness of time" was among the Jews. In the times of the Gospel, the Jews were the enlighteners of the world. "From Zion went forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." The first messengers of the cross—the Apostles of the Lamb—"turned the world upside down;" overthrowing the altars of paganism, and establishing everywhere, in greater or less extent, the worship of the one God—the God of the Jews—JEHOVAH. And the entire empire of Rome, comprising the greater part of the then known world, became overrun with the religion of that once

despised people. For Judaism and Christianity were essentially one. It was a false and spurious Judaism alone that stood opposed to the Gospel. Moses and Christ were one:—Christ, Moses unfolded. And times are yet coming, when a fulfilment of the language not less extraordinary shall appear. Times of mercy yet await the long outcast seed of Abraham. “The blindness” that “hath happened to them” is but for a time. The “vail shall be taken away.” And the restored of Israel, when brought to see the glories of Him whom their fathers crucified, and whom they have so long “crucified afresh” in “consenting to the deed of their fathers,” and to say of Jesus, as the true Messiah and the only Saviour, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD,”—shall be, both by the *evidence* which they will then present of the truth of the Gospel, and by their active agency in promoting its further and universal diffusion, the chief instruments of bringing in what Paul calls “the fulness of the Gentiles,” and so “filling the earth with God’s glory.” These events, both the past and the future, seem more commensurate to the strong terms—terms of such amplitude and elevation—used in this prophecy,—than aught that took place, even when stretched to the uttermost, in any age of the Jewish Church before the coming of Christ. Even the wonderful circumstances recorded in the Book of Esther; and the translation of the Jewish Scriptures into Greek and their extensive circulation in that language,—with whatever other considerations can be mustered, are, in my mind, as nothing, when regarded as fulfilments of the language before us. The passage brings to view the highest of all the honours that has been put, and is yet to be put, upon the chosen people,—that when “the knowledge of the LORD shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea,” to *them* the whole world will trace their religion. The restoration of an apostate world to God will, instrumentally, be their doing.

There is one objection to this view of the passage, which demands a moment’s notice. It may come before us again. I state it in the terms of the critic already referred to:—

“The prophecy,” says he, “is generally regarded as having respect to something yet future, and is often interpreted of the instrumentality of the Jews, when converted, in effecting the conversion of the world. I can find no such reference in the passage. ‘Jerusalem’ cannot be understood otherwise than literally, just as the term ‘Jew’ is to be so understood. But, according to our Lord’s doctrine respecting the New Dispensation, that city is no longer the place where men are exclusively to worship the Father,—‘Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.’* Incense and a pure offering are now presented to his name, in every place where his people assemble in the name of Jesus, and with a view to his glory.† It was otherwise before the advent of Christ. Jerusalem was the place which Jehovah had chosen to put his name; and thither all his true worshippers were expected to come, to the great festivals, in whatever country they might reside.” The reply to this is, that the gathering of the Gentiles to the true God in Gospel times is, by other prophets as well as Zechariah, predicted under symbolical terms taken from the Jewish dispensation. We take at present one example only. “For I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come, and see my glory. And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, to Tubal, and Javan, to the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon

* John iv. 21—23.

† Mal. i. 10, 11.

swift beasts, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the LORD, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the LORD. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.* And in another place, we shall find Zechariah himself using similar images:—"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."† But this we must leave for future explanation, and now close with one word of solemn admonition.

Let all of us "seek the LORD" for ourselves, as He has been pleased to reveal himself by Moses and the prophets, and "in these last days by his SON." Let us stir one another up to seek Him; each saying, "Let us go to pray before him, and to seek his face; and I will go also." Seek Him IN CHRIST. Nowhere, and no otherwise, can His face and favour be found by sinful and guilty men. "IF YOU SEEK HIM, HE WILL BE FOUND OF YOU: IF YOU FORSAKE HIM, HE WILL CAST YOU OFF FOR EVER."

* Isa. lxvi. 18—23.

† Chap. xiv. 16.

LECTURE X.

ZECH. IX. 1—8.

“The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth; and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.”

In this passage, we have predictions respecting various countries and cities—“the land of Hadrach,” “Hamath,” “Tyrus and Zidon;” and “Philistia.” In our introductory Lecture to the Book, we had occasion to notice the connexion of almost all the countries that are introduced in either the historical or the prophetic parts of the Old Testament with the chosen people—with Israel. We shall find the remark verified in the passage now before us, as well as elsewhere.

There can be no doubt, that by “the land of Hadrach” in the first verse, is meant SYRIA. The word “burden” is of frequent occurrence in the prophets. To the original

term so rendered two etymologies have been assigned—two roots, from either of which it might have sprung;—the one signifying to *bear a load*, the other to *raise the voice*. Considered as a derivative of the latter, it has, by different critics, been translated the *sentence*,* the *prophecy*, the *oracle*. In favour, however, of our received translation, the following considerations may be noticed: 1. The word is invariably, or almost invariably, used, when the prediction is one of *calamity*. Thus we have—"the burden of Babylon," "the burden of Moab," "the burden of Damascus," "the burden of Tyre," "the burden of Egypt;" and when "the burden of the valley of vision" is mentioned, it is a prophecy of suffering and distress. The beginning of the twelfth chapter of this book of Zechariah has been given as an *exception*—as an instance of its being used "in a good sense"—"The burden of the word of the Lord *for Israel*," or "concerning Israel." But it seems strange that it should. For although the prediction may be in favour of Israel, it is still a prediction of calamity and overthrow, through them, to others. This the two following verses show—in which Jerusalem is described as "a cup of trembling" and "a burdensome stone" to all the peoples that should be against her. And, if *this* case is not in point as an exception, there remains only another:—"The words of king Lemuel, the *prophecy* that his mother taught him."† This, certainly, is more like an instance to the purpose. It is, however, one only: and, from the style of what follows, being expostulation against a particular evil, evidently founded on the pernicious consequences to which it was sure to give rise, it may, after all, be regarded as a somewhat doubtful one.‡—2. That the word was so understood by the Jews themselves, when it was used by their prophets, we have evidence in a remarkable passage in Jeremiah—"And

* So Henderson, both here and in Isaiah.—ED.

† Prov. xxxi. 1.

‡ And not one at all if Stuart's view of that passage be accepted, according to which מַסָּה (*massa*) is to be regarded as a proper name. Comp. Lects. on Proverbs, vol. iii. p. 363. *note*.—ED.

when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken? And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken? But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD; Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD; therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence: and I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.* In the previous context, Jehovah denounces his wrath against *false* prophets, who prophesied lies, their own imaginations and dreams; and who pleased the people and ingratiated themselves with them for their own selfish ends by prophesying what, in contradistinction to *burdens*, Isaiah calls "*light things*." And the people were accustomed, it would appear, to speak jeeringly and in scorn of the word used by the *true* prophets—"the *burden* of the Lord." All that can be meant by the divine interdict on the use of the word must be, that it should never thus be the subject of derision. When "the *prophet* and the priest and the people" are placed together under the interdict, "*the prophet*" evidently denotes, not the true prophet but the false. This is evident from, first, the language of the thirty-third verse—"When this people, or the prophet, or a priest, *shall ask*

* Jer. xxiii. 33—40.

thee”—that is, Jeremiah, the *true* prophet: and, secondly, from the very same word continuing to be used by the inspired prophets afterwards; as here, in chapter twelfth, and in Malachi.

To these considerations another might be added, from the phraseology which follows—“and Damascus shall be *the rest thereof*,” the burden alighting and abiding there. I have said that by “the land of Hadrach” is meant Syria. It is quite uncertain, however, whence it gets the designation:—whether “*Hadrach*” be the name of a *city*, of a *country*, of a *prince*, or of an *idol*. It has been remarked, that, if the last letter is cut off, it corresponds to the general name of the kings of Syria, which was *Hadar*.* And this is as likely a conjecture,—without attempting to account for the addition to the name,—as any other. “*Damascus*” was the chief city of Syria. There the “burden” was to have its rest. The burden is not a prophecy of *destruction* to that city; but of visitation and suffering. It was fulfilled, when Alexander the Great, after his decisive victory over Darius, at the battle of Issus, sent one of his generals to Damascus, where the Persian monarch had stored up all his treasures; when the city was plundered of its immense wealth; and thirty thousand men, as well as seven thousand beasts laden with baggage, were taken, together with the satraps and grandees of Persia and their families. “The riches of Damascus” are mentioned by Isaiah at an earlier period. They were *then* to be a prey to the kings of Assyria. After the time of Alexander, the city passed to his successors; and from them to the Romans. Its native dominion never was recovered. And various have been the vicissitudes to which, under different invaders and occupants, it has since been subjected.

* “I very much suspect,” says Henderson, “that the word *הדרך* *Hadrach* is, after all, only a corruption of *הדר* (*Hadar*) the common name of the kings of Syria, though such corruption must have taken place at a very early period; for it was found in the copy from which the version of the LXX. was made.” For the far-fetched idea of Hengstenberg, and the still stranger notion of the Rabbins, who consider the term as a compound appellation of the Messiah, see Henderson’s note on the passage.—Ed.

"When the eyes of man," it is here added, "*as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward Jehovah.*" Some would render, "*even of all the tribes of Israel*"—restricting the looking towards the Lord to the chosen people themselves. Taking the words, however, as they stand, they may mean one or other of two things;—either that the events in providence would be such as to constrain other men in surrounding nations to mark and acknowledge the hand of Jehovah; or that the perils would be so imminent, to Israel as well as to other nations, that the eyes of those nations would watch the fate of Israel, to see whether that Jehovah in whom they trusted, and of whom they boasted, would be their protector.

"HAMATH" is a country, of which we find repeated mention made in the Old Testament. It was one of the countries from which the kings of Assyria, when, as God's ministers of vengeance, they had carried Israel captive from Samaria, brought men to supply their places, and people the land,—the inhabitants of each country bringing with them their own tutelary gods, and, at the same time, keeping up the worship of Jehovah as the God of the land. This country lay to the north of Damascus, between the adjoining districts of Zobah and Rehob. The expression—"and Hamath also *shall border* thereby," sounds as if Hamath's bordering on Damascus were part of the prediction; which it cannot be. It is better rendered, therefore, "And Hamath also *which bordereth* thereby:"—meaning that Hamath, as an adjoining country, should partake in "the burden," or calamitous invasion. The whole refers to the progressive conquests of Alexander the Great,—so called as the conqueror of the world,—one of the wholesale robbers and murderers of mankind, whose greatness was estimated by the extent to which they laid waste and brought under subjection countries which did not belong to them, and which had done them no harm. But they were many times God's instruments in the execution of retributive judgments, "although they meant not so, neither did their hearts think so." *Israel and Judah* had suffered from the Syrians and their capital city. And to

this the calamities of Damascus are expressly traced by the prophet Amos:—"Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron: but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael, which shall devour the palaces of Benhadad. I will break also the bar of Damascus, and cut off the inhabitant from the plain of Aven, and him that holdeth the sceptre from the house of Eden: and the people of Syria shall go into captivity unto Kir, saith the LORD."*—*Hazael* and *Benhadad* are expressly mentioned here; and both appear in the history as cruel oppressors of Israel.† And when, by the treachery of Hazael, Benhadad was put to death, what was the predicted conduct of the murderous successor, the anticipation of which drew tears from the Prophet's eyes:—"And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept. And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child."‡ It was for these things that the God of Israel executed vengeance.

The next places mentioned are "TYRUS and ZIDON:"—"Tyrus and Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets."—In his march towards Egypt, along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, these places lay immediately in the conqueror's way. "Zidon" cost him little trouble. It had sunk in importance, and was comparatively feeble. It surrendered on the conqueror's approach, and had a *viceroi* of his own appointed over it. Not so *Tyre*. Old Tyre, which had stood on the continent, had been besieged and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, and laid in ruins; ruins which served the purposes

* Amos i. 3—5.

† See 2 Kings vi. 24, 25.

‡ 2 Kings viii. 11, 12.

of Alexander now. The Tyrus which *he* had to assail was a new city—not built on the mainland, but on an island lying about half-a-mile from the shore. It was surrounded by a wall of defence one hundred and fifty feet in height. It had prospered, and risen to high eminence, especially in its varied and extensive commerce and immense wealth. It was the emporium of the then known world. It is called by Isaiah “a mart of nations;” and Ezekiel gives a striking enumeration of the countries with which she had traffic, and the products of each that were imported into her markets, in return for a share in her articles of trade and her opulence. It may be observed, that the pronoun “*it*” in the *second* verse, though having apparent reference to the more immediate antecedent *Zidon*, must evidently be understood of *Tyrus*—Sidon being associated with it as a sister city, but being little better than an appendage to it. It is Tyre that is spoken of as “very wise,” and as failing in her defences, *notwithstanding* her wisdom. And this very connexion shows the *kind* of wisdom that is especially meant,—worldly wisdom—wisdom in the construction of self-protecting bulwarks, and in the successful prosecution of commercial enterprise. This too appears from the description given by Ezekiel—“Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord God, Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a god, I sit in the seat of God in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: with thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: by thy great wisdom, and by thy traffick, hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches.” “Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God, Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty; thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee

before kings, that they may behold thee." * These, and other expressions, are strongly descriptive, at once of the wealth and splendour of Tyre; of the wisdom by which that wealth was accumulated, and of the boastful self-sufficiency which both inspired. Tyre, at the same time, in the terms of the infidel Volney (a remarkable, though involuntary, witness to the truth of the divine predictions), was "a nursery of arts and science"—wise also in this department.

Such was TYRE—"the crowning city"—rivalling the world at once in strength and in beauty and in riches; and puffed up with confidence in the security of the former, and admiration of the splendour and vastness of the latter. Then comes the prophecy of her fall:—verse 4: "Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire." Mark the language. *Who* was to "smite her power in the sea, and burn her with fire, and cast her out?" Alexander the Great, says history; JEHOVAH, † says divine revelation. Both are true. Only revelation keeps us in mind that "men are God's hand,"—a truth which profane history is too prone to overlook and forget; as indeed we ourselves—all of us—naturally are. The prediction before us of the overthrow of Tyre, is not, as in part we have already seen, *the first* of the kind. Isaiah predicted it fully and minutely, two centuries earlier than Zechariah; and Ezekiel eighty years before Zechariah, and a hundred and twenty after Isaiah. And from another prophet, further back by more than half-a-century than either of these—the prophet already cited regarding Damascus,—we find the same principle applied,—the principle of Tyrus being visited for her evil-entreating of God's chosen people. "Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and remembered not the brotherly covenant: but I will send a fire on the wall of

* Chap. xxviii. 2, 5, 12, 17.

† The reading of יְהוָה for אֲדָרִי is well sustained by manuscript authority, and adopted Henderson and others. It does not, however, affect the sentiment here expressed.—Ed.

Tyrus, which shall devour the palaces thereof." * "The brotherly covenant" may have reference to the friendship subsisting, and the league of alliance entered into, between David and Hiram the king of Tyre, and subsequently between Solomon and the same prince. And so too testifies another further back by twenty years than Amos. Joel says—and the terms are deserving of special notice—"Yea, and what have ye to do with me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render me a recompence? and if ye recompense me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head; because ye have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried into your temples my goodly pleasant things: the children also of Judah, and the children of Jerusalem, have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have sold them, and will return your recompence upon your own head: and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the children of Judah, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off: for the LORD hath spoken it." † Ezekiel mentions "*Javan*," or Greece, as trading with the merchants of Phenicia in the "*persons of men*." ‡ There was a trade in slaves between them; and among those thus sold by the Phenicians, or men of Tyre, were "children of Israel and Judah." And the threatened recompence was verified, as we may see immediately.

Alexander set his heart on the reduction of Tyre for three reasons:—because it would gratify his love of conquest; because it would clear his way of obstruction, whether going or returning; and because, by the additional and special credit it would bring to his arms, (giving a stronger impression than ever of their indomitable power), it would facilitate, through the operation of fear, his further conquests. But it was no easy achievement. The siege detained him, with all his immense force, for seven months. The only way, it was soon found, in which the city could, with any

* Amos i. 9, 10.

† Joel iii. 4—8.

‡ Ezek. xxvii. 13.

possibility of success, be approached, was by the construction of a mound or pier, of considerable breadth, from the mainland to the island, and so to the walls of the city. The work was one of apparently insurmountable difficulty. It was, however, begun, and prosecuted with an incredible amount of ardour and perseverance; the ruins of old Tyre supplying largely the necessary materials. The haughty Tyrians at first laughed it to scorn. But when part began to appear above the surface of the water, they became alarmed, and in every possible mode of harassment, set themselves to hinder and terminate it. So many and so great were the difficulties, at once from this cause, and from the effects of storms, in at one time preventing its prosecution, and at another sweeping it away when done, that even the resolution of Alexander had more than once nearly failed. But, rousing the courage of his troops, and taking advantage of their passions, irritated as they were by the galling and often unavoidably destructive assaults of the enemy, he still persisted, till at length a passage was completed; the boasted munitions scaled, the city taken, and pillaged, and burned. I mention the extreme difficulty of the enterprise, for the purpose of impressing the remembrance, that, in proportion to its difficulty, and the unlikelihood of its ever being tried, far less effected, becomes the remarkableness of the fulfilment of the predictions.

These various predictions, be it remembered, should be considered as relating to *both* Tyres—the old and the new; the one having succeeded the other. First, in fulfilment of them, we have Nebuchadnezzar besieging Old Tyre for no less a period than thirteen years. The time and the difficulty are in full accordance with the remarkable language of Jehovah to the prophet Ezekiel—“And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he

had served against it: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.* Thus perished Old Tyre. Then, two hundred and seventy years after, comes another conqueror against *New Tyre*, now more glorious and powerful than ever. And this mighty city, in the way described, was sacked, and burned, and cast into the sea. The valour of the besieged ought, in the bosom of a generous and noble-minded warrior, to have obtained admiration and kind treatment. But Alexander, in the violence of his irritation, showed them no mercy. Though fifteen thousand of the inhabitants escaped in their ships, six thousand or more were slain on the ramparts; upwards of two thousand were crucified along the walls; and thirty thousand prisoners, citizens and foreigners, were all sold into slavery. Thus Joel's prophecy was fulfilled;—a portion of these, we cannot doubt, becoming the servants of the Jewish people: the permission of Jehovah being, in this case, as well as in that of the Canaanites, the divine sanction to the property. It was righteous retribution. *We* have no such divine sanction for slavery; never had, and never *can* have.

We have still a Tyre in New Testament history. It was thus, though not on the same site, again restored. And of that Tyre many and various have been the fortunes since. It was, in the seventh century, taken by the Saracens; in the twelfth, by the Crusaders; and for three hundred years it was in possession of the Turks. But the predictions of two thousand years were not, even in one iota, to fail, or seem to fail. As the result of Turkish despotism and barbarity, what is Tyre now? "You see here," says one traveller, "no similitude of that glory for which it was so renowned in ancient times. You see here nothing but a mere Babel of broken walls,

* Ezek. xxix. 17—20.

pillars, and vaults. Its present inhabitants are merely a few poor wretches, harbouring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly by fishing; who seem to be preserved in this place by divine providence, as a visible argument, how God hath fulfilled his word concerning Tyre." And the infidel traveller, formerly cited, thus writes: "Instead of that ancient commerce so active and so extensive, Tyre, reduced to a miserable village, has no other trade than the exportation of a few sacks of corn and raw cotton; nor any merchant, but a single Greek factor, in the service of the French of Saïde, who scarcely makes sufficient profit to maintain his family." And again—"The whole village of Tyre consists only of fifty or sixty poor families, who live obscurely on the produce of their little ground, and a *trifling fishery*"—and by a third it is represented as "a rock whereon fishers dry their nets."* Thus to the letter has the threatening of God been fulfilled:—"I will make her like the top of a rock: it shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it."

"PHILISTIA"—the land of the Philistines, with its principal cities, comes next: verses 5—7. "Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza shall also see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite." Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod, were the chief cities of the Philistines; the capitals of different districts. And to no one acquainted, how superficially soever, with his Bible need I say, that the Philistines were among the sworn and inveterate enemies of Israel. Their country lay between Tyre (or Phenicia) and Egypt, on the south-east point of the Mediterranean sea. We cannot be surprised that

* Compare Keith.

had served against it: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God.* Thus perished Old Tyre. Then, two hundred and seventy years after, comes another conqueror against *New Tyre*, now more glorious and powerful than ever. And this mighty city, in the way described, was sacked, and burned, and cast into the sea. The valour of the besieged ought, in the bosom of a generous and noble-minded warrior, to have obtained admiration and kind treatment. But Alexander, in the violence of his irritation, showed them no mercy. Though fifteen thousand of the inhabitants escaped in their ships, six thousand or more were slain on the ramparts; upwards of two thousand were crucified along the walls; and thirty thousand prisoners, citizens and foreigners, were all sold into slavery. Thus Joel's prophecy was fulfilled;—a portion of these, we cannot doubt, becoming the servants of the Jewish people: the permission of Jehovah being, in this case, as well as in that of the Canaanites, the divine sanction to the property. It was righteous retribution. *We* have no such divine sanction for slavery; never had, and never *can* have.

We have still a Tyre in New Testament history. It was thus, though not on the same site, again restored. And of that Tyre many and various have been the fortunes since. It was, in the seventh century, taken by the Saracens; in the twelfth, by the Crusaders; and for three hundred years it was in possession of the Turks. But the predictions of two thousand years were not, even in one iota, to fail, or seem to fail. As the result of Turkish despotism and barbarity, what is Tyre now? "You see here," says one traveller, "no similitude of that glory for which it was so renowned in ancient times. You see here nothing but a mere Babel of broken walls,

* Ezek. xxix. 17—20.

pillars, and vaults. Its present inhabitants are merely a few poor wretches, harbouring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly by fishing; who seem to be preserved in this place by divine providence, as a visible argument, how God hath fulfilled his word concerning Tyre." And the infidel traveller, formerly cited, thus writes: "Instead of that ancient commerce so active and so extensive, Tyre, reduced to a miserable village, has no other trade than the exportation of a few sacks of corn and raw cotton; nor any merchant, but a single Greek factor, in the service of the French of Saïde, who scarcely makes sufficient profit to maintain his family." And again—"The whole village of Tyre consists only of fifty or sixty poor families, who live obscurely on the produce of their little ground, and a *trifling fishery*"—and by a third it is represented as "a rock whereon fishers dry their nets."* Thus to the letter has the threatening of God been fulfilled:—"I will make her like the top of a rock: it shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea; for I have spoken it."

"PHILISTIA"—the land of the Philistines, with its principal cities, comes next: verses 5—7. "Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza shall also see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite." Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, and Ashdod, were the chief cities of the Philistines; the capitals of different districts. And to no one acquainted, how superficially soever, with his Bible need I say, that the Philistines were among the sworn and inveterate enemies of Israel. Their country lay between Tyre (or Phenicia) and Egypt, on the south-east point of the Mediterranean sea. We cannot be surprised that

* Compare Keith.

the news of the fall of such a place as Tyre should have struck alarm into the inhabitants of the whole vicinity. "*Fear*" and "*sorrow*" were the prevailing feelings in the bosoms of those who witnessed or who heard of it. When it is said of Ekron—"her expectation shall be ashamed," the expectation probably was, that Tyre would be an insuperable obstacle in Alexander's way; that it would arrest his progress. *Fear* was the very effect which Alexander was desirous to produce. And we cannot doubt the consternation was not small. What hope could there be for *them*, when Tyre could not stand before so invincible an arm!

Neither with regard to "Philistia" was this the *first* prediction:—"For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom: but I will send a fire on the wall of Gaza, which shall devour the palaces thereof: and I will cut off the inhabitant from Ashdod, and him that holdeth the sceptre from Ashkelon; and I will turn mine hand against Ekron; and the remnant of the Philistines shall perish, saith the Lord God."* "For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon-day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea-coasts, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the Lord is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant. And the sea-coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks."† "Thus saith the Lord God, Because the Philistines have dealt by revenge, and have taken vengeance with a despiteful heart, to destroy it for the old hatred; therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will stretch out mine hand upon the Philistines, and I will cut off the Cherethims, and destroy the remnant of the sea-coasts."‡ "Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth; for the Lord will spoil the Philistines, the remnant

* Amos i. 6—8.

† Zeph. ii. 4—6.

‡ Ezek. xxv. 15, 16.

of the country of Caphtor. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself? O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? Put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there hath he appointed it.* Most minute has been the correspondence of the facts with the predictions. The country, which was rich and productive, has become a desolation: and the fate of the different cities has been in distinctive conformity to the pre-intimation as to each. It is here said—“*The king shall perish from Gaza.*” The cessation of rule or government, in whatever way effected, would have been a sufficient verification of this. Yet we cannot but think of the actual fate of Gaza’s king. The city stood out a two-months’ siege: ten thousand of its inhabitants were put to the sword: the remainder were sold as slaves: and Betis, the king, who should have been spared and honoured for his fidelity and bravery, was, in the spirit of a most ignoble vindictiveness, fastened by cords put through the tendons of the heels, and made to suffer a cruel death by being thus dragged through the streets of his own city after the chariot of the conqueror. “*Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.*” And what says the infidel traveller, in common with others?—“The sea-coast, by which it was formerly washed, is every day removing farther from the *deserted ruins* of Ashkelon!” “*And a bastard*”—more properly a foreigner or stranger—“*shall dwell in Ashdod:*” or be ruler there. That is, in the first instance, a stranger, of the conqueror’s nomination, was placed in Ashdod. But another prophet says—“The inhabitant shall be cut off from Ashdod.” And accordingly, the same traveller attests the fact:—“Amidst the various successive ruins, those of Ashdod, so powerful under the Philistines, are now remarkable for their scorpions”—the strongest expression for uninhabited desolateness. “In short,” says Dr. Keith, in his excellent volume on ful-

* Jer. xlvii. 4—7.

filled prophecy—a work which my young hearers will find full of important information and romantic interest, as well as confirmations of the truth of the Bible,—“In short, *cottages for shepherds and folds for flocks*, partially scattered along the *sea-coasts*, are now truly the best substitutes for populous cities that the once powerful realm of Philistia can produce; and *the remnant* of that land, which gave titles and grandeur to the Lords of the Philistines, *is destroyed*. Gaza, the chief of its Satrapies, ‘the abode of luxury and opulence,’ now *bereaved of its king*, and *bald* of all its fortifications, is the defenceless residence of a subsidiary ruler of a devastated province; and, in kindred degradation, ornaments of its once splendid edifices are now bedded in a wall that forms an enclosure for beasts. A handful of men could now take unobstructed possession of that place where a strong city opposed the entrance, and defied for a time the power, of the conqueror of the world. The walls, the dwellings, and the people, of *Ashkelon* have all perished; and although, in the time of the crusades, its name was shouted in triumph throughout every land in Europe, it is now literally *without an inhabitant*. And *Ashdod*, which withstood a siege treble the duration of that of Troy” (a siege of twenty-nine years, the longest recorded in history), “and thus outrivalled far the boast of Alexander at Gaza, has, in verification of ‘the word of God,’ which is sharper than any two-edged sword, been *cut off*, and has fallen before it to nothing. There is yet another city which was noted by the prophets, the very want of any information about which, and the absence of its name from several modern maps of Palestine, while the sites of other ruined cities are marked, are really the best confirmation of the truth of the prophecy that could possibly be given—‘*Ekron shall be rooted up*.’ It *is* rooted up. It was one of the chief cities of the Philistines:—but, though it still subsists, and Ashkelon and Ashdod retain their names in their ruins, the very name of Ekron is missing.”

Verse 7. “And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth: but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God; and he shall

be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite." Of the former part of this verse different interpretations have been given. "The Philistines and other enemies of the Jews," says Scott, "would be deprived of their power to waste them any more; and the spoil which they had taken by the most bloody and abominable murders or rapines would be torn from them, as the prey from between the teeth of a wild beast." "Their abandonment of idolatry, and their embracing the true religion," says Dr. Henderson, "is represented by their no longer drinking blood, and eating things sacrificed to idols, both of which were common among the pagans, but prohibited by the Mosaic law, and by the apostles." The latter interpretation accords well—especially in regard to the word "*abominations*," with the prevailing phraseology of Scripture:—and it also harmonizes well with the latter part of the verse, which plainly represents the conversion of the inhabitants of Philistia to the religion and worship of the true God:—"But," or rather *and*, "he that remaineth shall be for our God; and he shall be a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite." At the same time, the latter part of the verse may not less naturally agree with the other interpretation,—meaning "he that is left," after their power to spoil and devour shall be taken away. That many of the Philistines became proselytes to the Jewish religion, we have the testimony of the historian Josephus:—and the import of the words, "And he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite," seems to be, that between the proselyte and the native Jew there should be no distinction;—that they should enjoy equal privileges and equal honours. "The Jebusites were the original inhabitants of Jerusalem, who, on their subjugation by David, were incorporated among the Jews, and enjoyed their privileges." Araunah the Jebusite, on whose ground the temple was built, belonged to this class. In the prosperous times of the Maccabean dynasty, there were not a few who thus cast in their lot, as proselytes and fellow-worshippers, with the chosen people.

And that people the eighth verse represents as under the special protecting care of Jehovah:—"And I will encamp

about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes." I give the illustration of these words in the language of Dr. Henderson:—"They were not to be injured by the army of Alexander, either on its march to or from Egypt, a promise which was fulfilled to the letter: for, while that monarch punished the Samaritans, he showed great favour to the Jews. Nor was any foreign oppressor to invade their land, as the Assyrians and Chaldeans had done, during the period that was to intervene before the advent of the Messiah predicted in the verse immediately following. They were, indeed, subject to much suffering, both from the Egyptian and the Syrian kings; especially from Antiochus Epiphanes: but their nationality was not destroyed; and the evils to which they were exposed only paved the way for the Maccabean victories, and for the establishment of the Asmonean dynasty. For this preservation they were indebted to the providence of God, which watched over them for good. This is emphatically expressed in the last clause of the verse." That clause is, in our version—"for now have I seen with mine eyes." Better—because more expressive of the evidently intended sentiment—"for now have I *looked*," or, now do I look, "with mine eyes." The eyes of his observant faithfulness and love were ever on His people; and His "right hand and his holy arm"—the arm of His power, and skill, and righteousness—ever ready to bare itself for their protection and vindication. The expression, "*because of him that passeth by, and because of him that returneth*," is rightly, I presume, understood of Alexander and his army,—and it may be of other generals and their armies—passing to and from country to country, in their wars with one another and the prosecution of their ambitious conquests. Jehovah would keep watch over His people; would "encamp round about them"—compassing them with His favour, guarding them, like the unseen "chariots of fire and horses of fire round about Elisha" at Dothan. No invader should dispossess

them. No oppressor should do them permanent wrong. What they did suffer would be made to work for their good. Antiochus Epiphanes did profane the temple; but it was but a passing desecration, and led to the most favourable results.

We shall now close with a reflection or two from what has been said.

1. Every fulfilled prophecy is a distinct proof of the truth of the Bible—of its having been “given by inspiration of God.” Prophecy is a miracle. We generally apply the word miracle to supernatural manifestations of *power*; but it is equally applicable to supernatural manifestations of *knowledge*. Knowledge of futurity belongs only to God. And such cases of prediction as we find in this passage,—to which might well be added those respecting Nineveh, Babylon, Jerusalem, and the Jewish people, together with the whole extensive scheme of prophecy relating to the Messiah and his kingdom,—are all quite beyond the range of the most sagacious and far-seeing guess-work. Jehovah frequently appeals to such foreknowledge of the future as one of His distinctive attributes. He challenges on this ground the gods of the Heathen—“Let them show us things to come,” “that we may know that they are gods.” And the accomplishment of divine predictions stands out, incontestably, in the records of ancient history; and the proof is ever gaining strength, as time advances, and unfolds the correspondence between present events and the sayings—millenniums back—of “holy men of God who wrote and spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

2. The true value of the evidences of revelation arises from the value of *what is revealed*. Were it of trivial importance, that would be itself a strong presumptive proof—almost, indeed, a conclusive one,—that what professed to be such a revelation had no real title to be so regarded. That which revelation does make known has in it to us a value beyond the powers of man or angel to estimate. It “SHOWS UNTO US THE WAY OF SALVATION.” This is its great discovery. It is no mere re-publication of the lessons of nature. It is

not a mere volume of precepts. It does confirm all that nature teaches. It does set before us a perfect code of morals. But it does more. It addresses us not as creatures merely, but as sinners. It makes provision for us in this capacity—for our deliverance from the guilt, condemnation, and punishment of sin, and our restoration to the favour, the image, the enjoyment of God; and that for the eternity of our being. It is *this* that stamps every proof of the divinity of the Bible with such importance,—every species of evidence, and every variety of each species. The investigation of the evidence is what every man in his sane mind should feel to be the most momentous inquiry in which he can possibly be engaged.

3. The past fulfilment of prophecy should establish our “faith in God” regarding all that is yet future: and especially our “faith in God” as still, in all His providential administration, having His eye upon His Church:—the same principle which appears under the old economy in His constant regard to Israel, still operating under the new in His equally constant regard to the interests of His spiritual Zion—the “kingdom which is not of this world.” His entire, extensive, and complicated administration is ever working out the development of the plan of salvation. He is bringing on the glory of the latter days; the restoration of outcast Israel after the flesh, and the filling of the whole earth with the knowledge—the acknowledgment, the worship, the service, and the enjoyment of Himself. Let every such portion of God’s word assure us that against His Church “the gates of hell shall not prevail;” that He will ever be “a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her;” that “no weapon that is formed against her shall prosper; and that every tongue which riseth in judgment against her he will condemn.” “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love. He will joy over thee with singing.”

4. The enemies of God and of His people have cause to tremble. He will not leave either Himself or His people

unavenged. He that "toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye." It may at times be difficult to see on which side lies His favour;—in seasons when "the ungodly prosper in the world," while "waters of a full cup are wrung out" to the faithful. In such seasons, love seems as if hidden, and even as inverting the order of its manifestations, and tempting the Christian to say—"How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?" But when the whole comes to be set by God, and seen by men, in the light of the final judgment, all will be clear. The distinction then, between His people and His enemies, will be fully, finally, and irreversibly marked; an everlasting separation made, and the "great gulf fixed between them." On that day, in a higher sense than ever here, "THE EYES OF MEN WILL BE TOWARDS THE LORD." When He takes his seat on the "great white throne," "every eye shall see him." The righteous in that day shall sing, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is our God, we have waited for him: we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation:"—while the unbelieving and ungodly shall be found "calling to the mountains and to the rocks—Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand!"

"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into everlasting life." To which class would *you* belong? If you would find acceptance with the Judge, believe in the Saviour. If you would be safe before the throne, lay hold on the CROSS.

LECTURE XI.

ZECH. IX. 9—17.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off; and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee; when I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning; and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The Lord of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.”

In the former part of this chapter, we found, in the progressive conquests of Alexander the Great, and the favour which, in the midst of them, he showed to Jerusalem, the execution of God's vengeance, as here threatened, against the enemies and oppressors of His people, along with His protecting care (for men are God's hand) over His people themselves. By the reference to these speedily coming events, and in them to the career of that mighty prince and warrior, of whom it has been strongly said, that, having conquered one world, he sat down and wept that he had not another to conquer,—the Prophet,

under the impulse of inspiration, is rapt into times more distant, and fixing his eye on a king and conqueror of a very different description, invites his people, in terms of exulting transport, to hail his coming:—"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

That these verses have direct reference to the first advent of the long-promised Messiah, was admitted by all the ancient Jewish authorities:* and it can be questioned by no believer in the divine authority of the New Testament Scriptures. The express references to the prophecy, as having its accomplishment in one of the incidents of the life of Jesus, put this beyond a doubt.†

An observation here suggests itself respecting the evidence of divine revelation from *prophecy*,—that predictions like that before us are far from being the most conclusive proofs. The reason is obvious. The act is expressly described by the Prophet. It was therefore in the power of any one who chose to make pretensions to the Messiahship,—to his being the "King" here predicted,—to conform, in as imposing a way as he could, to the prophetic description. There are but few of the prophecies of which this can be alleged. Had there been *only* such, it would have exposed the whole argument to doubt and suspicion. The strongest of the evidences from prophecy is that drawn from cases in which the fulfilment is brought about by the agency of those who knew nothing whatever of the very existence of the predictions; or of those to whose likings the predictions were obnoxious, and who yet fulfilled them

* It was not till the twelfth century that it was otherwise interpreted.—Ed.

† See Matt. xxi. 1—5; and John xii. 12—16.

when they were aiming at the very contrary. Many such cases might be adduced in illustration from the history of our Lord, but they are not needed. The *principle* is sufficiently evident.

The prospect of the advent of Messiah was one to be hailed by the people of Judah and Jerusalem (here denoted by a common designation in the prophets, "The daughter of Zion,") with acclamations of transport. And the reasons are here assigned. They are found in his *personal and his official character*. We have

1. *Royal dignity*:—"Thy KING cometh unto thee!" And the designation is emphatic—"Thy King," as if they had never had another. This is on the same principle as when Jehovah says by Isaiah, "Behold *my servant*, whom I uphold!" as if there were no servant but Him; so infinitely did His service surpass that of all others—that of all others, indeed, deriving its interest from its relation to His. That *royalty* was to pertain to the coming Messiah might be shown from many predictions. He was to "sit" on the throne of David for ever.* And this promise of the covenant with David was announced by the angel, as receiving its fulfilment at his conception and birth. His being a *king* was anything but an objection to the Jews. But the *kind* of royalty was not at all to their minds. His kingdom was not to be "of this world." Its throne was not to be *in* this world. He was to receive the sceptre *in heaven*; "at the right hand of the Majesty" there. He is "King of kings and Lord of lords." "All things" are "put under his feet."† There was the humiliation first; then the glory. First the cross; then the crown. He was born of royal lineage—born a king; though, strictly speaking, his mediatorial reign did not commence till, having finished his work on earth, the Father said unto him, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." We have—

2. The *righteousness* of his *character and administration*: "HE IS JUST." The designation is to be understood as at

* Compare Isa. ix. 7; and Luke i. 32.

† Ephes. i. 22.

once *personal* and *official*: for, indeed, were there not the former, there could be little reason to count upon the latter. This attribute is frequently ascribed to him, as characterising himself and his government:—"And he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."* Jehovah calls him "my righteous servant." And His language by Jeremiah is, "Behold the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."† And this corresponds with New Testament designations and descriptions of him:—"That thou shouldst see *that just One*:" "Ye denied *the holy One and the Just*." His character, in principle and in practice, was the sinless perfection of righteousness. His throne is founded in the very charter of righteousness. And his whole administration is conducted on the principles of the purest and most unbending righteousness. We have—

3. *His saving grace and power*:—"HAVING SALVATION." I assume the correctness of the rendering.‡ "*Salvation*" was the very *object* of his coming. "The Son of man is come, to save that which was lost." And, this particular connects with the one preceding. The very design of his atonement was to render salvation consistent with the claims of righteousness: so that Jehovah might be "*a just God and a Saviour*."§ When he had completed his work, he was to

* Isa. xi. 3—5.

† Jer. xxiii. 5.

‡ The verb here is in the *Niphal* form; and many give it a strictly *passive* signification, and render "*saved*" "*righteous and saved*;" understanding it of Christ's deliverance from the grave after His resurrection. But this is surely, to say the least, extremely forced and unnatural. Dr. Henderson maintains that while the exigency of the case demands an *ACTIVE* sense, there are not wanting instances in which the *Niphal* form, though usually passive, has a "*signification purely active*."—ED.

§ Compare Rom. iii. 25, 26.

"*have salvation*;" not only as being himself delivered from death, but as possessing for bestowal on mankind all the blessings of "salvation"—beginning in pardon, and ending in "LIFE ETERNAL." * Mark—

4. The *humility* and *meekness* of his character:—"LOWLY, AND RIDING UPON AN ASS, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." This attribute of character distinguished his entire course; all his intercourse with men—with his friends, and with his enemies. And he held it forth as an encouragement to all, to come to him for his instructions, and his blessings:—"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; FOR I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."† How wonderful is this lowliness when, to give his disciples a practical lesson in the virtue by his example, he performed the menial service to each of them in succession, of washing their feet!—And even his triumphs were lowly;—"riding upon an ass;" and not one that had been trained for the use of royalty, but, as would appear, a rough unbroken colt—"a colt the foal of an ass." Although the ass was not the very mean and despised animal there that it is with us, yet *comparatively* it was so. The horse was the animal used in war; and, consequently, in the triumphal processions of kings and conquerors; and, on such occasions, arrayed in costly and elegant caparisons. Not such the procession of "Zion's King and Zion's Lord." Hailed he was, with hosannahs of acclamation; but under mistaken and temporary impressions. The Hosannah was exchanged for the vengeful cry "Away with him! Crucify him!" His *general* reception was that depicted with such pathos by another prophet:—"He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted

* Compare John xvii. 1—3.

† Matt. xi. 28, 29.

with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.”*

5. The *mode and means of the extension of the kingdom correspond with its spiritual nature*:—“AND I WILL CUT OFF THE CHARIOT FROM EPHRAIM, AND THE HORSE FROM JERUSALEM; AND THE BATTLE-BOW SHALL BE CUT OFF.” This, at the coming of the Messiah, was literally true respecting the civil and military power of the Jewish people. At the very time when they were looking for a Messiah who was to break the yoke from off their neck, establish their temporal freedom and power, and lead them on to universal conquest, their power was finally overthrown and destroyed, their temple and city laid in ashes, and themselves scattered abroad among all nations. Yet the kingdom of the Messiah grew and prospered. This itself showed its true nature. It was not, as the Jews anticipated, to be a *Jewish* kingdom. It was to have subjects among all peoples. And these subjects were not to be gained for him by the sword of steel, but by “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.” It was by such means alone his spiritual dominion was extended. It consisted of all, wherever his truth spread, whom that truth made free—spiritually free. All thus made free come under willing and happy subjection to his gracious sceptre. Force never made one subject of the King of Zion. “Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy power.” Then—

6. We have another leading characteristic of his reign—“*peace*.” “AND HE SHALL SPEAK PEACE TO THE HEATHEN,” or “to the NATIONS.” This is a feature of his reign frequently celebrated:—“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth.” “I create the fruit of thy lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.”† This latter passage is quoted by the Apostle

* Isa. liii. 2, 3.

† Is. l. lii. 7; lvii. 19.

Paul as having found its accomplishment in the union of Jews and Gentiles with each other, and the reconciliation of both to God:—"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."* By his Gospel—which is the message of peace—he "speaks peace" to sinners of mankind, whether Jews or heathens. Its first proclamation is one of "*peace with God.*" This is the first form of peace to which the Gospel is meant to bring the sinner: and this it proclaims to mankind at large. There is no exception. It was under the influence of the principles of the Gospel of peace, that, at the outset of the kingdom, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." And it will be under the extending influence of the same principles that the prophetic description shall in due time be realized:—"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."† Last of all, we have—

7. *The extent of his reign*:—"AND HIS DOMINION SHALL BE FROM SEA EVEN TO SEA, AND FROM THE RIVER EVEN TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH." This, as following his "speaking peace to the nations," is rightly rendered—not "to the ends of the land," but "to the ends of the earth." And the lan-

* Eph. ii. 14—17.

† Isa. xi. 6—9.

guage employed was universally understood by the Jews as embracing *the whole world*. The same terms occur, and with the same reference, in the seventy-second Psalm: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." His reign was thus to be universal, embracing all nations. But in a sense how widely different from Jewish anticipations! Instead of other nations being brought under their dominion,—a kind of universal monarchy, of which *they* were to be the head and ruling power;—they were to be "cast off" that other peoples might be "brought in." So that, while his kingdom was to prevail and prosper, it was to be among other nations,—the great body of Israel being rejected for their unbelief, and the Gentiles coming in their room—and the subjection to it was to be all *spiritual*. It is widening; and in due time, "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ."

The great difficulty, as to the remaindor of the chapter, is to determine the true principle of interpretation for it. *Three* are adopted—1. The *literal*: according to which, the *two* verses just commented on are an interruption of the previous subject; and at the eleventh verse there is an immediate return to it.—2. The *spiritual*: according to which the following verses are interpreted in a figurative sense, as having reference to the kingdom of Messiah: 3. The *literal and spiritual jointly*—the one as *typical* of the other.

Those who adopt the *first* of these principles understand the remainder of the passage as relating to the same period of the Jewish history as the verses preceding the ninth;—the period, that is, previous to the coming of Christ; only of course a somewhat later portion of it. They understand the "*Covenant*" in verse eleventh of the covenant of peculiar national privilege and blessing into which the Jews as a people were taken at Sinai—ratified by "the blood of calves and goats with the water and scarlet wool and hyssop;" the "*prisoners*," in that and the next verse, of the Jewish exiles, in bondage, in Egypt, and Greece, and other countries, whose return to Judea and Jerusalem

is promised, and who are invited to such return; and the rest of the description as relating to the military prowess and exploits of the Jews, under the protection and leadership of their covenant God, in the times of their Maccabean princes; to the divine favour in granting these successes, represented, under various sublime figures, as interposing in their behalf; and bestowing upon them at once the glory and the joy of triumph over their foes, and the abundance of corn and wine,—plentiful harvests, peace, and earthly prosperity.

That the passage *admits* of this *literal* interpretation—and that too without great straining—may be freely granted. Yet it does appear to me somewhat unnatural to suppose so brief an interlude as that in the ninth and tenth verses,—and then an immediate return to the former subject, broken off to introduce it;—making these two verses, insulated and by themselves, a mere parenthetical exclamation of anticipative triumph in the prospect of Messiah's coming, unconnected altogether with what follows. And then the union of the literal and the spiritual under the idea of *type* and *antitype*, seems not less, if not even more, unnatural. That the Jews were a typical people, no one denies. They were typical of the “chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people” of New Testament days—of the new and later economy. Their deliverance from Egypt, and their march through the wilderness, and their final settlement in the land of promise,—can readily enough be conceived of as, in an interesting way, representing the greater redemption from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the safe-conduct of all the subjects of that redemption, the spiritual “Israel of God,” to the Canaan of everlasting rest above. But it is surely too much to convert into types even those parts of their subsequent history which have no record in inspired writ; and of which we have our information only from apocryphal and profane authors;—to represent these as foreshadowing the spiritual events of the Messiah's kingdom. Should we, in some cases, be constrained to admit a *double sense* in prophecy, I cannot but think it unreasonable and mischievous to carry the application of the principle thus far.

You will perceive to what these remarks tend. I am far from affirming that there is no difficulty in the interpretation of the passage, when considered as having reference to the same subject which the Prophet had introduced in the immediately preceding verses; as having reference, that is, to the conquests of the King of Zion—the spiritual conquests of the righteous, the lowly, the peaceful Redeemer and Saviour of men, and the peculiar blessings of his reign. Such, however, is the view I am disposed to adopt. Taking up this principle of interpretation, let us select the chief contents of the passage.

1. *The ransom from spiritual captivity promised and offered*:—verses 11, 12. “As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to-day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.”

Who is here addressed? Probably THE MESSIAH. It is Jehovah's covenant promise to Him of the results of his blood-shedding; and the free invitation of sinners to avail themselves of it. The “covenant of peace” was between the Father and the Son. Well might it be called, in addressing the Messiah, *his* covenant; seeing it was by him that its conditions—all-fearful as they were—were undertaken and executed; seeing it was by his blood it was finally ratified; and seeing it was under his administration that all its blessed results, in time and in eternity, were to be realized. The state of sinners, under the power of sin and Satan, and subjects of the law's curse, is often, and naturally, represented as a state of miserable *bondage*. The figure, in the verse before us, is taken from the condition of captives in confinement in some low dungeon, or pit dug for the purpose, and perishing from thirst. Jehovah promises (for prophecies of what is future are often in past time, intimating the sureness of their fulfilment) that his blood should not be shed in vain. He undertakes for the release and freedom of all who were “given to him”—“*thy prisoners*.” He engages to bring them out of the pit to the light and air of heaven, and to the

full and free enjoyment of the blessings to which they have been redeemed. The "water that he should give them should be in them a well of water, springing up into everlasting life." In "the glorious liberty of the children of God," they should exult in looking back upon the darkness, and chains, and misery, and death, from which they had been emancipated, and anticipate the fulness of their freedom and their blessedness in the world to come. And all this is done "*by the blood of thy covenant.*" That blood was the *price* of the release: and, in the testimony of the Gospel, the *instrumental means*, under the agency of the Spirit, of effecting the rescue.

And then, sinners universally, as "prisoners of hope"—prisoners, that is, whose case was not desperate—are invited to avail themselves of the offered freedom. A "*strong hold*" was provided for them, where no enemy could reach or injure them; where they should be secure from the arrest of the broken law, and from the stroke of injured justice; where the very God against whom they had sinned, instead of punishing, would keep, and bless and save them. The "strong hold" is Christ. *He* is the perishing sinner's refuge and security. And the divine engagement to all who flee to Him is—"Even to-day do I declare, that I will render double unto thee." Unto *thee*:—that is, to the prisoners who comply with the invitation, taken individually. "*Double*" has frequently the sense, not strictly of *twice the quantity*, but simply of *great abundance*. It seems to mean here, a large amount of blessing,—outweighing far all the misery of the bondage from which they have been freed. It is the language of free, rich grace;—the language of Him who, to those who accept his mercy, bestows his blessing in no stinted measure. "*To-day do I declare,*" is an expression which may be understood as having reference to the predicted time—the time of the Messiah's coming and work; called in the New Testament "the accepted time, and the day of salvation." And the words continue *always true*. To every sinner in this assembly God

says—" *Even to-day* do I declare that I will render double unto thee."

2. We have the *agency* by which the spiritual conquests of Messiah were to be carried on:—verse 13. "When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man." We saw from the tenth verse that the weapons of earthly and secular power were to be taken from the Jewish people, at the time of Messiah's coming. By this we are shut up to one or other of two things respecting the verse read: namely, either to go back to the former period—the period preceding that coming, and interpret it literally; or, if we take it as referring to the times of the Messiah, to interpret it *spiritually*. I prefer the latter. I understand the words as figuratively representing the spiritual agency of the Apostles and other "ministers of the word"—wielders of "the sword of the Spirit;" and whose work is repeatedly represented under the image of a warfare.* It was to be *Jew* against *Gentile*; or rather *for* Gentile, but *against* the prevailing idolatries and superstitious and impious systems of the Heathen nations. We need not be surprised at the language—"thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece,"—when we recollect how frequently, in the New Testament, *Greek* stands for the more general designation of *Gentile*. "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek:"—the gospel is "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." And it is represented as specially opposed to, and destined to overturn, all the power and influence of Grecian wisdom:—"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling,

* 2 Cor. x. 3—5; Eph. vi. 10—18.

brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”* Considering, then, this war as the war of truth against error, and as having for its object the subjugation of the world to Christ, we have—

3. The *manifest presence and power of God with his servants* in the prosecution of it:—verses 14—16. “And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south. The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling-stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar. And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.” I have given the *general idea*. But the particularity in the detail is various and full of interest. In the first expression—“Jehovah shall be *seen over them*,” there seems an allusion to the ancient visible symbol of the divine presence and blessing—the “pillar of cloud and fire.” The meaning seems to be that the interpositions of divine power, providential and miraculous, in behalf of His servants, would be as satisfactory a proof of His being with them, as if He had visibly accompanied them. “*And his arrow shall go forth as lightning*,” strongly expresses the *speed* and the *resistless power* of His converting grace. The arrow of divine truth, with which the apostolic bow was fitted, carried conviction to the conscience, and quickening power to the heart. By killing it made alive. Are we not reminded of the lan-

* 1 Cor. i. 22—29.

guage of the psalmist, addressed by the Spirit of God in him to the same personage as here, the Messiah—"Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, and meekness, and righteousness: and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee."* "*And the Lord God shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.*" The terms are still martial. The *trumpet* blowing, very naturally represents the proclamation of the Gospel by divine authority, and with accompanying divine power; the design being the gathering of outcast sinners to Christ's standard, and thus the enlargement of his spiritual host, and the increased rapidity of his conquests. The closing figure in this verse appears to convey, very impressively, his *carrying everything before him*. What can resist the "whirlwind of the south?" What power, of earth or hell, could withstand the mighty energy of Divine grace, when God had a purpose of mercy and salvation? Thousands after thousands were subdued to the authority and grace of the exalted Son of God. The early progress was marvellous. The first messengers—or rather (to keep by the figure) warriors of the cross, were charged with "turning the world upside down." The whole extent of the Roman empire was speedily pervaded by the overturning power. They were ever under divine protection:—"The Lord God shall defend them." They were in the midst of enemies, numerous, powerful, and bitter. But "greater was He who was for them, than all that could be against them." He interposed for their deliverance from the violence of the enemy, by providential arrangements, by earthquakes, by angelic messengers, by direct punitive and deadly judgments. He released them, to the amazement and confusion of their enemies, from the closest and most vigilant confinement. He whispered to them, in visions of the night—"Be of good cheer:" "speak, and hold not thy peace;

* 1'sa. xlv. 3—5.

for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee." He enabled them, in faith to exclaim—"He hath said I will never leave thee nor forsake thee: so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man can do unto me:"—"If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? (As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.) Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."*

"*They shall devour*" is another martial metaphor, meaning that their enemies should be swallowed up before them. In the phrase—"And shall subdue with sling-stones," the "*with*" is supplementary. It is rendered by Dr. Henderson, "They shall tread down the sling-stones:" of which the meaning may be, that the missiles by which their enemies sought to injure them and arrest their progress, should prove of no avail; only falling at their feet and being trampled in the dust.—And in their whole course, amidst all their trials and difficulties, they should enjoy abundance of divine supports and consolations—those communications of divine influence to their souls, which should refresh, and invigorate, and cheer them, "as wine maketh glad the heart of man:"—"they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar." The "bowls" may be the vessels in which libations were poured out, and "the corners of the altar," receptacles there for the reception of what was poured over the sacrifice. They should thus be "filled with the Spirit." The influences of the divine Spirit are, on various occasions, symbolized by wine, which "maketh glad the heart of man." And the general idea is that of *sacred joy*—inward delight and exultation of spirit; expressed, it may be, by songs and shoutings. Then

* Rom. viii. 31, 32, 35—39.

they are represented as enjoying *safety*—safety like that of a flock gathered into the fold, and under the eye and the watchful care of the faithful shepherd;—and *honour*, high estimation and preciousness in the Lord's eyes:—"they shall be as the stones of a crown;" as precious jewels in the diadem of royalty. And indeed all believers are as precious stones in the crown of the King of Zion. And they shall be borne high; the honour put by God upon them being made so manifest and conspicuous, that it should have the effect of an ensign, under which the inhabitants of "his land" might enlist as soldiers in His spiritual army, and around which they might rally for united action against the common foe.

The closing verse is the utterance of grateful admiration:—"For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids."

The "*goodness*"—the *benevolence* of God is nowhere so manifested as by the Gospel. It is here He opens his heart, and pours out the very fulness of its love. Who can look at the cross,—who can read the "exceeding great and precious promises" made to believing sinners in the name of Him who died there, without exclaiming,—and, did we feel as we ought, the exclamation would be one of transport—"How great is his goodness!"

But it is not the *goodness* of God alone that is to be seen in the Gospel. "How great is his *beauty*!"—the loveliness of his entire character—its *light*, as well as its *love*;—the united harmony of all its attributes in the work of Christ! We are not truly under the renewing influence of the Holy Spirit, if it is only His *goodness* that we admire. The faith of the Gospel imparts a spiritual taste for "the beauty of holiness" as well as of love. It teaches and disposes us to delight in ALL THAT GOD IS!

It is while enjoying in abundance the provision made by His goodness,—and by His goodness in union and harmony with the perfection of His whole character,—for all our spiritual wants:—"Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids." "*Corn and wine*" are the invari-

able symbols for abundant provision of all needful good. And, taken spiritually, they mean all that is nourishing, and all that is cheering, to the divine life in the soul.

In conclusion:—

1. What cause of exulting joy have we all in the mission and work of the divine Messiah! Let us, believing in him, “rejoice in his salvation.”

2. While contemplating his all-perfect character,—his equity, his saving grace and compassion, his meekness and lowliness and self-denying condescension,—seek to have the elements of that character more and more transfused into your own hearts, and developed in your lives.

3. Seek, by the diligent use of all the legitimate means in your power, the widening extension of Christ’s kingdom,—means corresponding with its spiritual nature; delighting in its anticipated universality—when the angelic hymn shall be realized beyond all previous experience—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace; goodwill towards men!”

4. Be specially thankful for your deliverance at once from the guilt and condemnation, and from the bondage of sin; and seek to show your emancipation from its power, by denying it in every kind and in every degree;—ready to resist, were it even unto blood, “striving against it.” Prize and hold fast your freedom; not “using it as a cloak of maliciousness, but in love serving one another.”

5. Ever put your trust in God—for protection from enemies; for support in trials; for deliverance in dangers; for guidance in perplexities; for success in all your efforts to advance His glory. He alone can grant these blessings. He alone can “send prosperity!”

6. Seek a greater relish for spiritual blessings. He has provided suitable nutriment for the soul. Those souls cannot be in a thriving state, if there is little relish for the provision. The greater this relish—the more exquisite will be your enjoyment of all the “good and perfect gifts” of the divine benevolence; and the more rapid will be your

growth in the divine life, and in meetness for God's present and eternal service.

7. Lastly—To those who may yet be the voluntary captives and bond-slaves of sin, and Satan, and the world,—willing and pertinacious exiles from God's favour,—I can only now repeat the summons—"TURN YE TO THE STRONG HOLD, YE PRISONERS OF HOPE." There *is* hope. There *still* is hope. But the time of hope is shortening every moment, and never a moment sure. And if you accept not the offered freedom this very day—to-morrow it may be for ever too late.

LECTURE XII.

ZECH. X. 1—5.

“Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field. For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd. Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the Lord of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle. Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle-bow, out of him every oppressor together. And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the Lord is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.”

At the ninth verse of the preceding chapter, we found the Messiah introduced; that verse being expressly and repeatedly applied to him in the New Testament Scriptures. I then noticed what appeared to me the *unnaturalness* of interpreting that and the following verse as entirely insulated from the previous and subsequent connexion, and supposing the Prophet to return at the eleventh and following verses to the affairs of the Jews in the times immediately following that in which he lived. I adopted the principle of interpretation for the remainder of the chapter, which considers it as referring, under figures chiefly borrowed from military heroism, and the exploits of war and conquest, to the spiritual warfare of the apostles and other “good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” the “Captain of salvation.” The chapter closed with another figure, representing, as I conceive the

enjoyment of the rich abundance of spiritual blessings, by the plenty which, when war ceases, is the result of the restored and settled peace:—"For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty? Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids."*

Now it is with this last verse that the first of the chapter before us is evidently to be connected. Whence the abundance of the corn and the wine? The implied answer is—FROM JEHOVAH. This is the ever-recurring lesson of the Bible. We are never allowed, amidst the laws, and resources, and influences of nature, to forget the God of nature. All is under His supervision and control. The returning summers and autumns are productive or unproductive as He pleases. It is of His riches the earth is full. "Is there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? Or can the heavens give showers?" "He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart."† "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof: thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness."‡ And this first verse teaches the lesson of dependence, and the duty of owning that dependence by prayer to Him from whom alone all good comes:—"Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field." Forgetfulness of this dependence and of this duty was one of the sins specially charged by the prophets against the Jewish people:—"Neither say they in their heart,

* Chap. ix. 17.

† Psa. civ. 13—15.

‡ Psa. lxxv. 9—11.

Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.”*

But the lesson is as true, and as important, in regard to *spiritual* as in regard to temporal things. The figure, indeed, taken from *husbandry*,—from its labours and from the causes of success or of failure in those labours—is most natural, and of frequent use in Scripture:—“In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”† “Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field.”‡ “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”§ “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. For we are labourers together with God: ye are God’s husbandry; ye are God’s building.”||

The lesson is all-important. It is in the spiritual world, as it is in the natural. There is no personal prosperity—progress—productiveness—in the divine life, but under the influences of God’s Spirit. Not a blade of spiritual vegetation can spring up in the soul, nor can one atom of true spiritual fruit be produced in the life, save as “the Spirit is poured

* Jer. v. 24. Comp. Amos iv. 6, 7.

† Isa. xxxii. 15, 16.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 6—9.

† Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

§ Isa. lv. 10—13.

|| Several of our Lord’s parables, especially that of *the Sower*, might be cited for the same purpose.

from on high." Nor can any portion of the soil of the world—the "desolate heritages" of heathenism, with all the tillage that missionary labour can bestow upon them, be rendered productive of the "fruits of righteousness," except as God is pleased to shed down the same gracious influences—"pouring water on the thirsty, and floods on the dry ground." Hence the duty of, personally and socially, "asking of the Lord" the showers of His blessing, both in order to our own fruitfulness, and in order to the effectual cultivation of the out-field of the world.—"*Bright clouds*" would more properly be rendered "*lightnings*,"* as accompaniments and indications of the rains. The two are often thus connected:—"He maketh lightnings for the rain" is not an unfrequent mode of expression. The regular seasons for rain in Judea occurred twice in the year; about the months of September and March. They are often called the "early and the latter rains." They were looked for with eager anticipation. Well were it for us, had we the same anxious longing for those divine influences that are necessary to spiritual prosperity! Thus it was in "the beginning of the gospel." The sowers went forth, "bearing precious seed." They scattered it abroad. While they sowed, they prayed. The showers of spiritual influence came down. So "the wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them; and the desert rejoiced, and blossomed as the rose."

The people are then reminded, how complete all other grounds of confidence, in which either their fathers or they had trusted, had heretofore failed them:—verse 2. "For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams, they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled because there was no shepherd." This stands in contrast with the former verse; and is a reason for the duty there enjoined. Their false prophets, attaching themselves to idols, and seducing the people to their worship; and those of

* So in the *margin*; מִזְרִי is thus rendered Job xxviii. 26; xxxviii. 25.—ED.

them who, speaking in Jehovah's name, said, "Thus saith Jehovah, when Jehovah had not spoken,"—putting into His lips, and clothing with His authority, the "lies" and "false dreams" by which they sought to entice them from Him and from His ways,—had ever given vain promises and "*vain comfort*," all ending in bitterness and "vexation of spirit." They had proved shepherds that only starved, and scattered, and exposed their flocks, instead of feeding, and tending, gathering, and protecting them. Thus, under such misleading guides, such selfish and unprincipled shepherds, the flock was driven about and "*troubled*." They had "*no shepherd*"—no truly faithful shepherd, who took a concern in the well-being of the flock.

And with the exception of their not being *addicted to idolatry*, such continued their helpless, unprotected, uncared-for state in the time of our Lord. Mark what is said—"When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."* And there can be little doubt, that he had his eye upon those "blind leaders of the blind," who, with mighty pride and pretension, "sat in Moses' seat," but whose teachings utterly misled the people—being all the promptings of a hypocritical selfishness—when he said, "All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."†

And what God here says of the "*shepherds*" and the

* Matt. ix. 36.

† John x. 8—13.

"goats,"—the professed *leaders* of the flock—"Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats," is in full harmony with the utterances of the Redeemer in the days of his flesh. In what terms of withering and indignant rebuke He addressed the public teachers of his day:—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."*

The words which follow—"I have visited the house of Judah," are understood, by those who interpret the whole passage as referring to times preceding Christ's advent, of God's raising up such leaders and rulers as the *Maccabees*, by whom the Jews were elevated from their depressed condition to military renown and civil prosperity. They are certainly *capable* of such application. But, having, for reasons formerly assigned, and which may receive confirmation from this very passage, adopted the idea that the reference is to *Gospel times*,—we must consider the language before us, and that which follows, as a continuation of the same figures of speech with those in the preceding chapter. "*The goodly horse in the battle*" was the choice war-horse—the most stately, powerful and spirited of his kind; and withal richly equipped and caparisoned—the steed on which the general of the army rode and conquered. Thus was Jehovah to put honour upon Judah. Judah was to be the "war-horse" on which the Messiah was to "go forth, conquering and to conquer." It was to be by the instrumentality of that people that his conquests were to be effected. It is added (v. 4.) "Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together." The reference of the pronoun "*him*" here is to "the LORD of hosts." The words may be more suitably and

* Matt. xxiii. 13, 15: see also Luke xi. 46, 52.

simply rendered "*From him.*" And when we read the words, "From him came *the corner*;" that is, more fully expressed, "*the corner-stone*,"—all our associations are immediately with that one person who so explicitly, and so repeatedly, has this designation. I do not say that the designation *may not* be otherwise applied—to *civil rulers*, for example, as uniting and supporting the community: but we do naturally look in one direction:—"Wherefore, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house."* This stone, emphatically, "came from JEHOVAH." By Him it was selected. By Him it was prepared. By Him it was laid. If we thus interpret "*the corner-stone*"—what of "*the nail*," and the "*battle-bow*," and "*every oppressor*?"

"With us," says Dr. Henderson, "the nail would be an insignificant image; but the Oriental nail is a large peg, in the inside of a room, wrought into the wall when the house is built, and on which is hung all kinds of household stuff, together with the different implements of war:"—that is, I presume, the one or the other, according to place and circumstances. See, then, how this designation is applied elsewhere:—"I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house."† This is spoken of "*Eliakim the son of Hilkiab*." "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiab: and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand: and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and

* Isa. xxviii. 16: Eph. ii. 20: 1 Pet. ii. 4.

† Isa. xxii. 23.

none shall open.”* That different parts of this description are used by our Lord *of himself*† does not seem a sufficient reason for regarding the reference as being, in the Prophet, to Him. The application of the passage to Christ is by Calvin pronounced rash and inconsiderate. “The Prophet,” says he, “is comparing two men—Shebna and Eliakim. Shebna is deposed; Eliakim succeeds him: what has that to do with Christ?” The designation of “*the nail in a sure place*,” applied to Eliakim signifies the steady and secure support which he should give to all the branches of his family dependent upon him, and upon his influence.

As applied in the passage before us, it may therefore refer, not to Christ himself, already mentioned under *another* designation, but to such rulers and office-bearers in the Church, as served to strengthen and hold it together; and on whom were suspended, ever ready for use, all the implements of the evangelical warfare. Possibly the special reference may be to the office of chief authority and influential efficiency—that of THE APOSTLES.

The “*battle-bow*” may be considered as the representative of armour in general; a part put for the whole—for what Paul calls “the whole armour of God”—all required both for the personal and the official conflict; the *latter*, more distinctively here. It is officially that the Apostle says of himself—“For, though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”‡ These “weapons of their warfare” were “*from Him*”—from a divine armoury. And none else might lawfully be employed in His battles,—the battles of truth against error,—of the spiritual against the carnal and worldly,—of good against evil,—of God against the wicked one. From

* Isa. xxii. 20—22.

† Comp. Rev. iii. 7.

‡ 2 Cor. x. 3—5.

Him too came the strength and the skill to wield them ; and from Him all the success.

“And from him *every oppressor* together.” Now, in a certain sense it is true, that from God has come every oppressor of His Church, in every age, and under every dispensation. They have been raised up by Him for the Church’s correction and trial, and for the ends which correction and trial are designed to serve. True though this be, however, it does not seem very natural to introduce the “*oppressors*”—the antagonist forces—the afflicting powers, as coming in the same way from Jehovah with “the corner-stone” itself, and the agencies and instruments for carrying forward His work. On this ground, it is presumed, Dr. Henderson renders the word here “*rulers*”—“*every ruler*.” Yet in its other occurrences, he renders it *oppressors*. And from its etymology this would seem to be its proper meaning. We are taught the lesson, therefore, that *friend* and *foe* alike are of God’s raising up. He raises up the foe—to render the victory the more conspicuous and signal. And such seems the very spirit of the language of Jehovah by Isaiah :—“Behold, they shall surely gather together, but not by me : whosoever shall gather together against thee shall fall for thy sake. Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work ; and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper ; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.” * The expression in the first of these verses,—“*but not by me*,” may seem at variance with the sentiment. The meaning of the words, however, evidently is—not that they should gather together without His knowledge and providential permission ; for He foresees and predicts it, —but not with His approval ; not with His power aiding and abetting them. Then the spirit of what follows is—that the framers of the weapons of opposition were all of His originating, and under His power ; and could succeed no further than *He* should

* Isa. liv. 15—17.

allow them:—"I have *created* the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work; and I have created the waster to destroy:" I have the full command of him and of his weapon:—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." The smith is the maker of the weapon: but who is the maker of the smith? He is *my* creature; and he is my instrument: and both he and his weapon are under my supreme control. Neither shall "prosper." Nor shall any false accuser be able to malign thee or thy servants, without detection, exposure, and shame.

The same figure is then resumed in the fifth verse, which was employed in the former chapter; that of soldiers of the cross doing successful battle against the enemies of God:—"They shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded." The comparison is one which does not admit of minute illustration. The figure is a general one, conveying the idea of triumphant progress against all opposing enemies. The terms are indicative of thorough and shameful discomfiture. It was in looking forward to the success of His apostles,—so rapid, so signal, that our Lord said, "I beheld Satan fall, as lightning from heaven." The verse before us is a simple comparison—"They shall be as mighty men." They shall triumph over the enemies of their cause as completely as the most victorious general can triumph over the enemies of his. The causes and the weapons are widely different; and so is the spirit in which the war is conducted, and the results to those who are taken captive by the conquerors. In the case of the warriors of the Cross, the enemies whom, by divine aid, they overcome, are the hosts of hell, and the powers of wickedness in this evil world; but the purpose of the war with these enemies is a merciful one. It is to rescue "the captives of the terrible." It is to make the slaves of Satan the "freemen of Christ." It is to "deliver them that were drawn unto death;" and to bring them to a life of freedom,—a life of holiness, happiness, and hope. And mark here the source at once of their valour, and

of their success:—" *They shall fight because the Lord is with them.*" Here it is. It is under His banner they go forth to the field. It is the assurance of His presence with them that inspires their courage. They say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" His Spirit gives them the energy of enterprise and perseverance. They "go in the strength of the Lord GOD." "Through him they do valiantly; for He it is that treads down their enemies." It is He that "bruises Satan under their feet;" and that, by their instrumentality, "takes the prey from the mighty,"—bringing sinners "from the power of Satan to himself." This is the secret of all their success. But for the Lord's presence with them, they must be wholly insufficient for the conflict; nor could they bring off one trophy of victory. And their grateful song in looking at the victories achieved and the captives liberated, ever is, in the language of one of the greatest that ever took part in the contest—"Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."*

Let me close for the present with one or two practical reflections.

1. Mark the importance of *cultivating the spirit of dependence and of prayer*. We are, as creatures, and as sinners, dependent for everything we need, whether for the body or the soul,—for this life or the life to come. It is fitting that we should *feel* this dependence; and that we should give it expression. *Prayer* is the expression of it. But prayer is something more. It is, as from our childhood we learned to say, "The offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgment of his mercies."† It is the first part of this definition that is, strictly and properly, prayer. It is, "*asking of the Lord.*" It is a precious privilege; it is a sacredly incumbent duty. It is one of the divinely ordered means for obtaining any desired

* 2 Cor. ii. 14.

† Shorter Catechism, Quest. 98.

good. The benefit of it is not merely (precious as that is) the influence it has on our own minds in bringing us into closer and more intimate communion with “the Father of our spirits”—thus contributing to purify and elevate our affections. God’s word ascribes to it an *efficacy* on His own counsels and doings; its being His inducement to act in one way rather than in another. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” And the illustration of this by the case of Elias is specially appropriate to the injunction in the opening of this chapter. “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.”* “*Ask of the Lord rain.*” We should ask it in seasons when it is needed for the refreshment and fructification of the earth. And we should ask it, in a higher sense,—ask the outpouring of God’s Spirit,—for the revival and growth of religion and its appropriate fruits in our own souls; for its revival in our churches, and for its progressive influence and productiveness throughout the world. But then—

2. We must *never be satisfied with praying*. We must never separate *prayer* from *action*. The two must go together. It will not do for the husbandman to be ever on his knees, pleading that his fields may be productive. All the labour and all the skill of husbandry must be put forth by him. He must work and pray: he must pray and work. It is a mockery of God, if he does otherwise. To work without praying is ungodliness and presumption: to pray without working is enthusiasm and hypocrisy. And so it is in the *spiritual* department. It is not enough that we pray God to “work in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.” We have no right to expect that He will hear us, or bestow upon us any portion of His gracious influences, unless, by the diligent use of the means of spiritual improvement, we

* James v. 17, 18.

are fulfilling the injunction—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." In vain do parents "ask of the Lord rain" upon the domestic vineyard, if they are not diligent and careful in tending the young plants, and training and nurturing them to life and fruitfulness. And equally in vain do pastors and people "ask of the LORD rain," for the revival of the drooping interests of religion in their own church, or in the churches of the saints in general, unless they are using the means of revival. In vain do they pray for the increase of the fire of love and zeal, if they are neither laying on fuel, nor stirring and blowing what has been laid on. And in vain do Christians cry to God for "rain" on the desolate and fruitless—or rather the weed-thorn-and-poison-bearing soil of this outcast world, unless they are sending forth cultivators to all the ends of the earth, with the seed of the word and all the implements and resources of spiritual husbandry. In vain do they seek the conversion of Israel, unless they are putting forth efforts for removing the vail of ignorance and prejudice by the communication of the light of instruction. And in vain do they look for "the knowledge of the glory of the Lord" filling the earth, if all they do is *praying* that it may. They must *send it* to earth's utmost bounds.

3. As "the *corner-stone* cometh from JEHOVAH," *we need not be afraid to rest upon it*. As coming from the very God with whom we have to do, it must, for that very reason, be *sure*. And bear in mind another consequence equally manifest, that, as thus coming from Jehovah—*nothing else can be sure*. It is a stone of divinely "tried" material: it is "elect and precious"—divinely precious: and it is chosen and laid by God. In every view of it, we may feel ourselves safe in resting on it: and nothing but despair and destruction can await any who refuse to make it, and it alone, the ground of their hopes. And from Him who provided and sent the "corner-stone," must also come every official and other agency that contributes to confirm, unite, protect, enlarge, and purify, the Church of God; and deliver it from all who would oppress, and waste, and devour it.

LECTURE XIII.

ZECH. X. 6—12.

“And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the Lord their God, and will hear them. And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the Lord. I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them; and they shall increase as they have increased. And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again. I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord.”

I FEEL constrained to concur with those commentators who regard this passage as a prediction and promise of what is yet to come. As, however, there are toward the close of this Book of Zechariah predictions still more explicitly pointing to the period of a future restoration of the Jews, it has appeared to me better to defer the *discussion* of that interesting question, and points connected with it, till we come forward to the exposition of those passages. Were I to enter into it now, it would lead to such anticipation of them as would be undesirable. Meanwhile, however, I shall proceed upon the assumption that the passage has reference to the *future restoration* of Israel and Judah, without *positively*

determining whether that restoration is to be temporal, or spiritual, or both; only pointing out its *apparent* bearing on that question.

"The house of *Judah* and the house of *Joseph*," spoken of in the first of these verses, signify, respectively, the *two* tribes and the *ten* tribes—unitedly, the whole house of Israel—the posterity of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The declaration "*I will save them, and bring them again and place them*," cannot refer to the return from Babylon; seeing, in that respect, they had been already "saved" and "brought again," and "placed." And the language is much too strong to have reference to any such remaining partial deliverances and returnings,—*additions* only to that from Babylon,—which might take place under the Maccabean princes, or at any period of their history between the Prophet's days and the coming of Christ. And if it refers to a period *subsequent* to the coming of Christ, to what else *can* the reference be but to their recovery from their present long-continued out-cast and scattered condition?

Notice, then, what the terms *seem* to imply, without finally affirming their precise import. "*I will strengthen the house of Judah*," must refer either to *secular* or to *spiritual* power. The former seems the more natural of the two, on the supposition that, if spiritual power is meant, they were to remain, as converted individuals, in a scattered state,—personally renewed, and endowed with spiritual energy, but not becoming a united body or community. "*The house of Judah*" and "*the house of Joseph*," certainly sound much liker united tribes than scattered individuals. We leave, then, for future consideration, what evidence there may be for the communication to the gathering assemblies of the dispersed children of Abraham, of power for the re-asserting of their rights, and their re-settlement, by such power, in the land of their fathers. At present, we go no farther than to say, that it *looks like it*. So, surely, do the terms, "*I will bring them again to place them*," look like their return to that land, and their establishment in it. And then, whatever be its real nature—whether secular or

spiritual, or both,—we have the *cause* of the recovery ;—“*for I have mercy upon thee.*” They have been the objects of Jehovah’s mercy all along. How often did they owe to that mercy, ever reluctant to smite, the suspension and withdrawal of threatened “vengeance on their inventions!”—how often the removal of their sufferings, whenever indications appeared of their having produced a salutary effect in “turning their hearts back again!” With what an amount of unmerited blessing too had that distinguishing mercy all along loaded them! And, in regard to their present state, and the prospect of their recovery, we cannot have a better commentary on the words before us, than Paul gives us in his Epistle to the Romans—“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, (lest ye should be wise in your own conceits,) that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved ; as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes : but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief ; even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all.”* They are still, then, “beloved for the fathers’ sakes ;” and it is on this account that times of mercy still await them. “I have mercy on them,” says Jehovah here. He does not say, “I *will* have mercy ;” though, considered *actually* and *practically*, that was true. He rather expresses the present state of His own heart, as it were, towards them, from which His future merciful visitation of them was to arise—“I *have* mercy” upon them. His bowels still yearned in pity toward

* Rom. xi. 25—32.

His outcast but not finally rejected people: and in the mercy He still cherished toward them, He would, in His own time, visit and deliver them. Then we have the *completeness* of their recovery:—"They shall be *as though I had not cast them off.*" From their immediate connexion with the previous clause—"I have mercy upon them," there can be little doubt that these words indicate primarily the *full restoration of God's favour*; that they should be as thoroughly re-established in His regard and loving-kindness, as if they never had experienced any visitation of His displeasure; that they should enjoy no stinted measure of His love; but rather a more exuberant outflow of that love than at any former time. They were to be as though they never had deserved rejection; so thoroughly would He "turn from the fierceness of his anger, and take away all his wrath," and "lift upon them anew the light of his countenance." It may be remarked further, that had they "never been *cast off*," they would have remained in undisturbed possession of their own land: and does not, therefore, their "being as though they had not been cast off" seem to imply their being replaced in that land?—We have the *cause* of their restoration again, expressed in another form:—"for *I am the Lord their God, and will hear them.*" To those who are familiar with their Bibles I need not say how frequent, in the Old Testament, is the recurrence of the words—"I am the Lord your God." It was Jehovah's language, when He took His ancient people into covenant with Him; and it recurs times without number, in connexion both with the mention of the covenant generally, and with its special precepts and promises:—the reiteration of it being intended to inspire them at once with gratitude and with awe. "*I will hear them.*" This implies, what is not expressly mentioned, their *calling upon Him*. It might, indeed, relate to His hearing the voice of their misery—their lamentations over their outcast and forlorn state; as it is said of the Israelites in Egypt, when Jehovah gives Moses his commission to be their deliverer, "I have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows:" "I have heard

their groaning, and am come down to deliver them." We would rather understand the words as referring to their *calling upon Jehovah*, in a state of awakening and excitement, and a disposition to look again to the God of their fathers in the spirit of penitential abasement, confession, and return of heart. And "*I will hear them*" is the fulfilment of a promise repeatedly made to them in former days, and with a reference, as we may hereafter see, to their present dispersed state:—"If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me: and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity; then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land."* And the prayer of Solomon was founded upon such divine assurances—"If they shall be-think themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness; and so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling-place, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them."† *Jehovah yet* "waits to be gracious:" His ear is open to their very first penitential cry. "*He will hear them.*" And while His ear

* Lev. xxvi. 40—42.

† 1 Kings viii. 47—50.

will be open, (*that* alone were little) His *power* will be ready to aid. He will make bare the arm of omnipotence for them. "His right hand and his holy arm" will "get him the victory." "If God be for them, who shall be against them?"

In the seventh verse, we have the same promise to *Ephraim* specially as to the house of Judah and the house of Joseph in the verse preceding: "Ephraim shall be *as a mighty man*,"—a man at once of *valour* and of *strength* against every opposing foe,—"*mighty*" through the communicated and accompanying might of Jehovah his God. We have further, what, in the connexion, we might regard as imparting the energy and might, both of heart and of hand,—the exulting *joy* with which they should be filled.* "Their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD." And no wonder the terms affirming this joy are heaped one upon another. In proportion to the amount, the variety, the long continuance, of their outcast condition,—of depression and humiliation, of scorn and reproach, of personal and social oppression and suffering; and of all as the effect and indication of what itself was worse than them all,—divine desertion,—the hidings of God's countenance, His frown, His wrath,—should be the joy of Jehovah's return and blessing! And the joy was not to be confined to the generation that should then live; it was to descend to generations following—"their children shall see it, and be glad." So said Isaiah, in reference, apparently, to the same period—"They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble: for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." And we may notice how here too the blessing is connected with prayer—"And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."† The blessing shall be permanent. The terms of Psa. ciii. 17, 18 shall be verified—"But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto

* Comp. Neh. viii. 10.

† Isa. lxxv. 23, 24.

children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

The *figure* in verse eighth is singular, yet very expressive—"I will also *hiss*," or rather *whistle*, "for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased." Two views are given of the figure. It is commonly, and probably with justice, understood as referring to a particular *whistle* used by the shepherd for calling his scattered flock together,—a sound to which they were accustomed, which they understood, and, when they heard it, immediately obeyed, flocking to the spot whence it came,—gathering around and following their leader. By some, however, it is understood of a different practice—that of collecting *bees* by a whistle. Thus Dr. Henderson: "The verb* signifies to *whistle*, or give a shrill sound, as those who keep bees do, who, by means of a whistle, or pipe, call them out from and back to their hives." He refers to Isa. v. 26, where the same figure is used, and where he explains it in the same way:—"And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly." The *meaning* is the same, whichever of the two allusions be preferred. As sheep flock together at the well-known call of the shepherd, as bees follow in swarms the shrill note of the bee-master, so should the Lord, by His own means, gather His scattered people from their dispersions, how widely soever distant, and bring them to Himself and to their heritage. And again the *reason* is assigned: "for I have redeemed them." They were his redeemed people,—the people whom he had delivered and made his own, "He gave Egypt for their ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for them." They are many times spoken of as His "redeemed;" being in this respect, and in this appellation, the type of the true spiritual Israel. "Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out,

as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretched forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.*
 “Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.”† Having redeemed them, they were *His*,—a “purchased possession,”—“a peculiar treasure unto himself above all peoples.” And it was as having this property and this interest in them, that He would reclaim them, and reinstate them in his favour, and in the possession of the privileges and blessings which that favour had at first conferred, and would return again in fuller compliment than ever. “*They shall increase as they have increased*”—is language which seems to mean, that their increase shall be great, such as it had been in the most prosperous periods of their history; that their increase, when restored, should be such as had never, at any of these periods, been surpassed. That increase would be the effect of their peace and prosperity, with the abundant blessing of Jehovah.

In the ninth verse we seem to have—their *dispersions*; their *penitent recognition of God*; and their *consequent preservation and return*. The words “I will sow them among the people,” might indeed refer to God’s making them His instruments, as efficient missionaries, for bringing in “the fulness of the Gentiles” after their own restoration. But it seems more probably to refer to the fact of God’s having scattered them among the nations, as seed is scattered over

* Isa. xliv. 21—24.

† Jer. xxxi. 10, 11.

the field ; and the use of such a phrase probably implies, that by thus “sowing them among the people,” it was God’s intention that *there* they should bring forth fruit to Him. And yet in this I am forgetting myself. When so scattered, they were scattered for their unbelieving rejection of God’s own Son, the “Prince of life ;” and therefore could not, when sown, be expected to produce any thing else than “grapes of Sodom and clusters of Gomorrah.” They could aid the progress of divine truth, only as being a standing miracle in attestation of its divine original. This they have been ; this they are ; this they are destined yet more signally to be. God here promises—“*They shall remember me in far countries ;*” by which can only be meant, that, in their scattered state a spirit of serious thoughtfulness should simultaneously come over them, or should spread amongst them, by which they should be led to see and to own the hand of the God of Abraham in their long-continued visitation, and, in the desires of their hearts to look to Him from whom they had revolted ; and that, in consequence of this, they should, instead of being left to die, finally cast off and perishing, “*live with their children, and turn again ;*” they should obtain favour and life from the God of the covenant, and come anew into possession of their special privileges. The question whether their conversion to the faith of Christ shall precede or follow their return to their own land, (on the supposition that they *are* so to return), is one of those which we defer for future consideration. Meanwhile the verse which follows, while, in one view, it appears to countenance this supposition, is, in another view, more favourable, as well as the eleventh, to the *spiritual* interpretation of the descriptions given of their restoration :—

Verses 10, 11. “I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria : and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon ; and place shall not be found for them. And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up ; and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt

shall depart away." It seems a very poor and paltry interpretation of the former part of the tenth verse, to explain it of no more than the return from the countries named of the comparatively small numbers of the seed of Israel who had been sold into these countries,—their return to Judea in the times of prosperity that followed the settlement of the people there after the redemption from Babylon. The language of *both* verses is much too lofty for any thing so comparatively insignificant. It relates, evidently, not to the return of *a few more in addition* to the body of the nation, when they had been for perhaps a couple of centuries established again in Palestine; but to "*the house of Judah*" and "*the house of Joseph*"—the twelve tribes of the children of Israel, considered in the aggregate of their scattered families. To no event, as it appears to me, less extensive than a general restoration of that people can the terms here used be applicable; by nothing less can their comprehensive import be at all exhausted. If in this we are right, then their being brought from "*Egypt*" and from "*Assyria*" cannot be understood literally, whether the restoration be personal and spiritual, or national and secular, or both. It must be taken as an allusion to past deliverances, and as containing, in that allusion, the Divine assurance, that the promised future deliverance would be as certain and as perfect as the past. And this is confirmed by the further allusions of a similar kind, in verse eleventh, to the passage through the Red Sea, and through the Jordan, when the waters of the one on their quitting Egypt, and of the other on their entering Canaan, were parted hither and thither before them by Divine omnipotence. I need not say, the meaning cannot be that they were literally to pass through the Red Sea a second time, or a second time between the swellings, or rather under the intercepted and overhanging flood, of the Jordan. The idea manifestly is, that, as God by almighty power made way for His people of old, He would by the same power remove every obstacle that might appear to lie between them and their future restoration; that the same omnipotence, that divided the

sea and arrested the rolling river, would ensure in its own way, their redemption from their last and longest exile, and reinstate them in favour and blessing. It may be alleged, that if "Egypt" and "Assyria" are not to be interpreted literally, neither must "*The land of Gilead and Lebanon.*" This is plausible; and all due weight will be given to it when we come hereafter to the question we have proposed to discuss. I only remark, that since the allusions to Egypt and Assyria, and to the Red Sea and the Jordan, *must* be understood as allusions only and not as facts to be repeated, the inference is hardly so undeniable as it might at first appear; and we may find reasons in confirmation of its *literal* meaning hereafter. The latter part of the tenth verse is a repetition, in stronger terms, of the promise in the end of the eighth—"they shall increase as they have increased:" *here* we have it, "*place shall not be found for them.*" In a state of undisturbed tranquillity,—in the enjoyment of the abundance of all things, and of the divine blessing with them all, as well as in the practice of every personal and social virtue under the influence of the universally prevailing principles of God's truth,—the land shall become "too strait" for their rapidly augmenting numbers. A promise of such increase is a promise that includes much more than it expresses. It implies in it all that contributes to such rapid multiplication.

"He shall pass through the sea, *with affliction.*" The words have been variously rendered. If we retain them as they stand in our English translation, the allusion, in the "affliction,"—the distress, or overthrow, may be to the vengeance inflicted by the same sea upon the enemies of Israel, which had made way for their own safe transit;—the smitten waves returning to overwhelm the foe, who was, at the same time; "troubled" by previous divine interference and hindrance in the pursuit of the chosen people. The language of the narrative is, in this respect, a commentary on the words before us:—"And it came to pass, that in the morning watch the LORD looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the

host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels, that they drave them heavily: so that the Egyptians said, Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the LORD fighteth for them against the Egyptians.* And the general import of the latter part of the eleventh verse—"And the pride of the Assyrians shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away," we take to be, that, as the haughty boastings of Sennacherib, and the sceptred power of Pharaoh proved alike feeble and unavailing against the might of Jehovah in former days, so should all the combined opposition of the most inveterate enemies prove in days to come. Before Him—when He had a purpose to fulfil—a promise to His people to accomplish, all pride should be abased, all power baffled, all counsel turned to foolishness. All the Antichristian enemies of His people should be discomfited, as all their heathen and idolatrous enemies had been. No interposing power should stand before them. The Lord should "take them away, as with a whirlwind, both living and in his wrath."

And when all this has been done for them—we have, last of all, in verse twelfth, the happy state in which they should find themselves:—"I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD." Whatever we make of the "*strength*" promised in verse sixth, we can hardly hesitate in considering *spiritual* strength as what is intended here. It is strength similar to that referred to by Paul, when he says—"Finally, my brethren, be *strong in the Lord*, and in the power of his might." It is Jehovah that speaks—"I will strengthen them." It is His own strength that He imparts—"I will strengthen them *in the Lord*." The meaning probably is, that He would establish their *confidence in Himself*, and *thus* strengthen them; teaching and enabling them so to depend upon Him, as that they might say with Paul—"When I am weak, then am I strong." "Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from

* Exod. xiv. 24, 25.

the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." *

"They shall walk up and down in my name." "To walk in the name of a deity," says Dr. Henderson, "is a Hebrew mode of speech, descriptive of a course of action pursued in accordance with his character and will;" and he illustrates the point by reference to the language of Micah, "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever."† To "walk up and down in Jehovah's name," then, signifies to bear the open profession of that name, and maintain a course of conduct in harmony with such profession. The expression seems, at the same time, further to imply a state of felt peace and freedom; and confidence of safety, and happy social intercommunion, arising from faith in God,—from unshaken reliance on His power and wisdom, faithfulness and love. And in the passage just referred to in Micah the same association of ideas appears:—"He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it. For all people will walk every one in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of the LORD our God for ever and ever."‡

* Isa. xl. 27—31.

† Chap. iv. 5.

‡ Chap. iv. 3—5.

In conclusion, observe—

1. What *warning*, and what *encouragement* is here held out to all *backsliders*,—to all who have borne the profession of God's name and worship, but have departed from Him—spurning His will, and resisting His correction, fretting under it, as “bullocks unaccustomed to the yoke,” and persisting in their disobedience, and refusing submission. The dealings of Jehovah with His ancient people are a *warning* to such. He proved himself faithful to His *threatenings*; and He will to all His threatenings be faithful still. Think of them. Very fearful they are:—“If we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* And if God prove himself faithful to such threatenings—woe to the backsliding and apostate professor! There is no doom so fearful as his! But God's dealings with His ancient people hold out to the backsliding *encouragement* as well as warning. He proved himself no less faithful to His *promises*. There is, indeed, no promise, and no encouragement to backsliders, *persisting in their backsliding*. No: for such there is nothing but the fearful doom just read from God's word. But there is every possible encouragement *to return to God*. He “waits to be gracious.” His arms are open. His language is—“Return, ye backsliding children, for I will heal your backslidings:” “Return unto me, for I have

* Heb. x. 26—31.

redeemed thee:" "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips."* No sooner is this said, in penitence and faith, than the promise is realized:—"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him."†

2. Let God's people ever *seek their strength from Him*, that, resisting every evil influence, whether from within or from without, they may always be found "walking up and down in His name." Let them rejoice in God; and His joy will be their strength. But never let them forget, that He puts no joy into any heart, but the heart that is "sound in his statutes,"—under the influence of a sincere spirit of obedience. He imparts no strength but to those who seek it for the discharge of duty, or the resistance of temptation, or the patient endurance of trial. To those only who are "thinking on and doing" "whatsoever things are true, and just, and pure, and honest, and lovely, and of good report," is the promise given,—*"THE GOD OF PEACE SHALL BE WITH YOU."* It was when God's ancient people gloried in *having* the law, while they forgot the *doing* of it; trusted in privileges, while they overlooked the use and the end of them; called God their Father while they disregarded His authority, and disobeyed His will; boasted of being God's chosen people, while the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles through them; professed to look for the Messiah on the faith of the prophecies, but, through the power of a worldly spirit, rejected the Messiah when he came;—that Jehovah cast them off. It is only by the acceptance of his truth, and the manifestation of the sincerity of such acceptance by a desire to know and to do His will, that they can ever be restored to favour, to honour, and to blessing. If *we*, then, would hold fast God's favour, we must hold fast God's TRUTH, and God's WILL.‡

* Hosea xiv. 2.

† Ver. 4.

‡ Compare Rom. xi. 17—23.

LECTURE XIV.

ZECH. XI. 1—8.

“Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. Howl, fir-tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down. There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled. Thus saith the Lord my God, Feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the Lord; for I am rich; and their own shepherds pity them not. For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord; but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king; and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them. And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock. Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.”

THE latter part of the preceding chapter we considered as having reference to an event yet future—the restoration of the Jewish people from their present state of unbelief and dispersion; leaving for discussion hereafter the questions respecting the nature of that restoration,—whether secular or spiritual, and consequently whether national or personal. The chapter before us I regard, with most critics and expositors, as having its fulfilment in the agencies and circumstances by which the calamitous dispersion of that people was to be effected; that is, to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans, with the fearful judgments attendant and consequent upon that event. The only objection offered

to this interpretation is, that Haggai and Zechariah having received their prophetic commission for the express purpose of animating and cheering on the people in the work of rebuilding the temple and the city, any such predictions of coming calamities were but ill-suited for such an end. But this is far from conclusive. First of all, we do not know the precise *date* of this particular prediction. Reading the Book, as we do, as forming one whole, though in consecutive portions, we are apt to overlook the fact, that the various predictions were imparted to the prophet's mind, and by him made known to the people, at intervals, of which some might be very considerable. How late, therefore, in Zechariah's life, and how long after the building of the temple had been completed, and that of the city extensively accomplished, we cannot tell. And besides this, the people had not ceased to require *warnings* as well as encouragements. The truth respecting their future destiny was not to be withheld from them. The prediction of calamities was designed and fitted to awaken serious consideration, self-inquiry, penitence, and reformation. Besides, to whatever calamities the chapter is regarded as referring, there is no interpreting it otherwise than as foretelling *calamities of some kind*. So that the same objection would hold against every possible interpretation of the chapter; unless one could be devised, which would convert terms that evidently express distress and suffering into terms indicative of prosperity and happiness.

It is not my purpose to enter into minute detail in interpreting the successive verses; but rather to give a general view of the leading particulars referred to by the Prophet.

It seems altogether unnatural to attempt explaining "LEBANON"—addressed in the beginning of the chapter,—of the mountain and its forests *literally*. And not much less unnatural is the interpretation of it, as a *figure* for the *city Jerusalem*, with its lofty buildings and turrets, resembling the crowded and towering cedars and cypresses of Lebanon. The "*doors*" naturally suggest some *building*; and as naturally there presents itself to our minds the *temple*. And the principal expositors, both Jewish and Gentile, understand

it as having this reference. It matters not whether we attach credit or not to the story told by Josephus, of the doors of the temple, some thirty or forty years previous to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, opening of their own accord, and of the Rabbi Johanan saying to it, "I know thy destruction is nigh, according to the prophecy of Zechariah—'Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fires may devour thy cedars.'" The story shows how the passage in Zechariah was by Jewish interpreters understood: and true it is, that on that occasion, though in contravention of the most peremptory orders of the Roman general, the temple was set on fire, and consumed to the ground;—a Roman soldier dashing a flaming brand through one of its windows, and its doors being at the same time burst open, to complete and hasten the destruction. Thus *this* prophecy, and also the later predictions of the Saviour, that there "should not be left one stone upon another that should not be thrown down," were fulfilled to the letter. The temple is addressed under the designation of "Lebanon" for the obvious reason, its walls in every part were lined with cedar and cypress wood from the forests of that mountain. All its interior might be said to have been constructed from Lebanon. "Timber of cedar and timber of fir," or cypress, were the two descriptions of wood, for which, when about to erect the temple, Solomon sent his orders, for skilful hewers, to Hiram the king of Tyre.

The first verse, then, we regard as having reference to that extraordinary, and at the time far-distant, event, the destruction of the Jewish temple by fire. What follows, in the second and third verses, is to be interpreted of the consternation, horror, and anguish, in consequence of this terrible catastrophe, of the chief men, whether in civil or ecclesiastical station in the community:—"Howl, fir-tree," or cypress-tree, "for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down."

There can be no reasonable doubt, especially when the terms are compared with those of other parts of prophetic

scripture, that such is the import:—that by *cedars* and *cypresses* are to be understood the principal men—the leaders of the people—of superior and inferior grades. The exclamation, “Howl, cypress-tree, for the cedar is fallen,” seems to express the sentiment—a most natural one—that when the higher falls, the lower may well take the alarm, and cry out in terror and despair. The “*oaks of Bashan*” must be taken in the same figurative acceptance; the various trees of the wood representing the varieties of rank and authority:—the towering “*cedars*” being a natural emblem of elevated station, and the sturdy and spreading “*oaks*,” of power; while the “*firs*,” or *cypresses*, more common and less admired and set-by, yet not less really useful, aptly denote rulers of inferior grade, without whose subordinate functions, well administered, the higher might be more ornamental than really valuable and efficient. All alike, in the days referred to, should have cause for alarm and lamentation. “*The forest of the vintage*” is, on the margin “the *defenced forest*,” and the rendering, (or renderings equivalent to it, as the “*fortified forest*,” “the *fenced wood*”) is preferred by the best critics. Lebanon is conceived to have been thus environed for protection; and under this figure the city of Jerusalem is understood to be meant, surrounded as it was by its insurmountable walls and fortifications; in spite of which, though after a long and harassing siege, it ultimately fell a prey to the divinely commissioned enemy. And all the men of power and rank, ecclesiastical, civil, and military, involved in the fearful overthrow, “howl” in agony together!

In Bible phraseology, and by a most natural figure, “*shepherds*” is a designation for the same descriptions of men—men in power—*leaders*, *protectors*, and *providers* for a community. It is used for office, both in the Church and in the State:—verse 3. “There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.”* The designation “*young lions*” refers evi-

* Compare Ezek. xxxiv. 1—10; and Jer. xxv. 34—38. In the

dently to the same class of persons with the "*shepherds*." As the latter designation describes their *office*; the former depicts their *character*, which was that of fierceness and rapacity; on the same account as they are elsewhere styled "wolves ravening the prey;" and again, where the two are conjoined, "roaring lions, and evening wolves that gnaw not the bones till the morrow." "*The glory*" of these "*shepherds*" being "spoiled," signifies the bringing down of all their honour, and power, and the wealth and luxury which, by the abuse of their power, they had acquired; all becoming a prey to the sacking and pillaging besiegers. "*The pride of Jordan*" lay in its evergreens and brush-wood with which its banks were enriched and adorned: and these being the covert and habitation of the "young lions," the two parts of the figure are appropriate. As the lions howl and roar in dismay and fury when dislodged from their refuges and dwelling-places; whether by the swelling flood sweeping over their lairs, ("he shall come up like a lion *from the swellings of Jordan*") or from the cutting-down or the burning of their habitations—so should the priests and rulers of Jerusalem be alarmed and struck with desperation and rage, when they found their city, within whose walls they had counted themselves secure from the very possibility of hostile entrance, laid open to the outrage of an exasperated enemy, and all its resources given up to plunder and destruction;—country as well as city thrown into confusion and desolation! How striking the *character* given of the "*shepherds*" that should be in the predicted time, as presented in the language which immediately follows:—"Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter; whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not."

The most reasonable principle of interpretation for this and for what follows seems to be, (and it is always of prime

latter of these two passages, there is a similar reference as in that before us to the lions.

importance to ascertain such a principle) that *the Prophet is himself addressed*; and that what he is commanded to do *he does in vision*, and as the *representative*, or *type*, of *Him who was to come*. It is the principle of *visionary impersonation*; setting forth, in symbolical prophetic action, what was to be done, under divine commission and charge, by the future Prophet of the church—the Messiah—the “*good Shepherd*”—“the *great Shepherd of the sheep*.” We are not without exemplifications, in the other prophets, of similar symbolical actions, done in vision, recorded, and published to the people for their instruction and warning. If this principle be the correct one,—and I am fully persuaded it is,—then we are warranted to explain this portion of the prophecy as having reference to Christ, and as fulfilled in His character, and teachings, and doings.

“*The flock of the slaughter*,” is a most expressive figure for *the people doomed to destruction*. Could anything more significantly express the prospects before the Jewish people at the time of Messiah’s coming than a flock of sheep destined to the shambles? By the “*possessors*,” the owners or proprietors, of the sheep, are still, of course, to be understood the same men as before—the rulers or leaders of the people, who had them completely under their orders, and at their disposal, making of them, and doing with them, what they pleased. The general idea is that of self-willed and selfish oppression, with a view to the gratification of ambitious and covetous desires;—elevating and enriching themselves by wasting and impoverishing others; having no compassion, no benevolent feeling but making *self* the all-in-all; not ruling, whether in the civil or the ecclesiastical department, for the benefit of those committed to their control, but looking on and treating the people as put under them for their own benefit. And mark two things connected with the conduct thus imputed to them; the *absence of all conscience*, and the *hypocritical pretensions to piety*:—“They slay them, and hold themselves not guilty;” and they say, “*Blessed be the Lord, for I am rich*.” For all their ruthless selfishness and cruel oppression, they had no qualms of conscience. When,

in the language of Ezekiel, they "ate the fat, and clothed themselves with the wool, and killed them that were fed," they were like Solomon's adulterous woman — "eating and wiping their mouth, and saying, We have done no evil." Their hearts were without feeling, and their consciences seared and callous. And in the midst of all this, they are vastly religious! They make their wealth in ways which God abhors and reprobates, and then they thank Him for their success. "*Blessed be Jehovah, for I am rich,*" they devoutly exclaimed, when "the cries of those" by the plundering of whom they had enriched themselves "were entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." Thus, while "through covetousness, they with feigned words made merchandise of men," they, at the same moment, with either the feigned words of conscious hypocrisy, or the unfeigned words of unconscious self-deception and self-conceit, sought to impose upon the omniscient God, and to put Him off with words and forms, in which there was *no heart* and no moral or spiritual obedience. Now, there could not be a juster description of the leading features in the character of the Pharisees of Christ's day. These were — *avarice* and *hypocrisy*: their hypocrisy being, as is the wont of religious dissemblers, accompanied with a large amount of ostentation and parade. Mark the manner in which the Lord himself speaks of them:—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess."* This "hypocrisy"

* Matt. xxiii. 14, 23—25.

was "the leaven of the Pharisees:" and it was all for self-aggrandizement. "Gain was their godliness." The character of "the rulers, and scribes, and Pharisees" *then* was quite in keeping with that of the priests and judges of ancient times. Of *them* we have such descriptions as the following:—"His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter."* "Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."† In this latter passage we have the *judicial consequence*. So we have it in the passage before us. It was, in both periods, "Like priest, like people;" and "like people, like priest." The character of the one was a counterpart in principle, and, as far as it could be, in practice, of that of the other. In the time of Jesus, "the wrath was speedily coming upon them to the uttermost:"—

Verse 6. "For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them." The words imply, that heretofore pity had been felt for them and extended to them. Of a very large amount, indeed, of compassionate forbearance they had been the objects. "Many a time did they provoke Him," not in the wilderness only, but from the hour of their

* Isa. lvi. 10, 11.

† Micah iii. 9—12.

rescue from the bondage of Egypt down through their whole history. He warned them. He threatened them. He besought them. He chastised them, when warning, and threatening, and entreaty failed: and then was verified the discription given by the Psalmist, after detailing some of the miraculous ways in which God had supplied their wants, even when those wants had led them to rebellious murmuring:—"For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath. For he remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, and grieve him in the desert! Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."* When they had added to all their previous acts, of unbelief and rebellion, the worst of all—the rejection of the true Messiah—the crucifixion of "the Lord of glory," and had thus "filled up the cup of their iniquity,"—the Divine pity toward them was to cease. His forbearance had reached its utmost limit; and He must visit them with the heavy woes which, both by Moses and the successive prophets, He had denounced against them. Observe the particular evils here threatened: 1. Jehovah would "*deliver the men, every one into his neighbour's hand.*" This seems to refer to the disagreements and disturbances,—the factions, and deadly feuds,—which were to arise among the inhabitants of the city themselves;

* Psa. lxxviii. 32—41.

through diversities of counsel, and through the maddening distress produced by famine and its attendant pestilence;—the intolerable gnawings of famished hunger making “their eye evil,” as in the prophetic denunciations it is repeatedly expressed,—“making their eye evil” towards one another, and overpowering the very tenderest and strongest of nature’s affections. Such was the fury of the contending factions, that all parts of the city, and the very temple itself, were filled with slaughter. In their mutual phrenzy, they burned the very granaries of corn which should have sustained them, and destroyed the magazines of arms which should have defended them. And such was the pressure of the famine, that parents and children, husbands and wives, tore the food from each other’s mouths, scanty and bad as it was, and, as a subsequent verse hints, fed on the very bodies of the dead, envying them the meanwhile the cessation of their sufferings.

2. It is here said God would deliver every man “*into the hand of his king*.”—that is, would deliver the population generally and individually, to this regal power. Who, then, was this “*King*?” The expression is a singular one. We cannot but see an allusion in it to the remarkable fact, of the Jews having rejected their own royal and divine Messiah—“the Son of God, and the King of Israel;” and having, in answer to the remonstrance of Pilate, when they clamoured for His crucifixion—“Shall I crucify your king?” exclaimed, with one indignant voice, “*We have no king but Cæsar!*” Is not this, then, the King into whose hand they were to be delivered? O! it was a moment of fearful and guilty infatuation,—an ill-fated moment,—when they thus, with outcries of fury, renounced, and demanded the death of, their own King—the true “King of the Jews;” and in the abject spirit of slaves, threw themselves on the power and the tender mercies of the Roman emperor. God gave them into the hands of this king. *He* became the executioner, by his armies, of the divine vengeance. And fearful was the execution. In the siege, and at the fall of Jerusalem eleven hundred thousand Jews perished, and in the course of

the war about a million and a half. And this was the doing of the king of their own choice.

3. The "*land*," as well as the city, was to be smitten: "*and they shall smite the land; and out of their hand will I not deliver them.*" And thus it was. Not only was Jerusalem laid in ruins, and the very foundations of the temple torn up with a ploughshare; and so the prediction of Micah literally verified, "*For your sake shall Zion be ploughed as a field;*" but the whole country of Judea was thoroughly subjugated. The very land itself was sold, and Gentiles put in possession of it, while the Jews, in vast numbers, were either sold into captivity, or slain. Jehovah had many a time delivered them out of the hand of their enemies. It was not that the power of Rome was too mighty for Him. He could have chased that foe from Jerusalem, like "*the thistle-down before the whirlwind.*" He *could*, but He *would* not. The hour of His righteous vengeance was come; and He would not rescue either the city or the land. Both—and the inhabitants of both—are to be left to their predicted doom.

The beginning of the seventh verse is read by the best modern critics in the past tense. This seems to be right. It is the compliance of the Prophet with the charge, and is prophetically descriptive of the compliance of Him whom, in the vision, he personates: "*So I fed the flock of slaughter.*" It may be observed further, that the word rendered "*poor*" has equally the signification of *afflicted, suffering, miserable*: and the whole first clause of the verse may be, and has been, translated, "*So I fed the flock of slaughter,—truly miserable sheep.*"* They were miserable, as being thus mercilessly ruled and robbed, and as being thus devoted to "*slaughter.*" The words, then, represent what the Messiah in person did. He fed the miserable flock. He was "*sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*" "*When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion toward them, because they fainted and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shep-*

* This is Dr. Henderson's rendering, and perhaps the best.—ED.

herd." Widely different was His character from that of the shepherds described here. *They* were "hirelings"—"thieves and robbers." They fed and clothed themselves off the sheep: and in time of danger, when their duty was to face it in defence of their flocks, they "left the sheep and fled," abandoning them to be caught and scattered by the prowling and voracious wolf. But what says He of himself? "I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, and am known of mine. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." "He went about doing good." All his divine instructions, and all his miracles of mercy, had the same gracious end; the fulfilment of the purpose for which He came into the world—"to seek and to save that which was lost." He beautifully portrays his own character, and the delight which the success of his mission afforded him, when under the same image, he said—"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost."*

The "*two staves*," or crooks, have, as to their *number*, been differently explained. Matthew Henry explains it of "*the double care* that Christ takes of His sheep, ordinary shepherds having but *one* crook; and more particularly of His care for both the bodies and the souls of men." According to Dr. Henderson, "the two crooks were symbolical of the two modes of treatment which the Hebrews had experienced, under the guidance and protection of the providence of God." Both of these interpretations seem to me somewhat fanciful. Why may we not consider the *two* crooks as having reference to "*the house of Judah* and *the house of Israel*;" and as meant to intimate that neither was to be left out in the mission and work of "the good shepherd?" This appears to me a sufficiently natural and easy explanation; and it is confirmed by

* Luke xv. 4—6.

the very reference to "*Judah and Israel*" in the breaking of the second of the crooks,—to be hereafter considered.

The one staff, or crook, the Prophet called "*Beauty*," and the other "*Bands*." The former word has been rendered *grace* or *favour*.* It may mean either. It seems to me, that the best way of getting at the meaning of both the names is, to consider the meaning of *the breaking of them*, referred to in verses tenth and fourteenth; "And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel."

We see from the former of these verses, why the first staff was called "*beauty*," or *favour*. The *covenant* of Jehovah (for "*my covenant*" must be understood as the words of the Divine Messiah, impersonated by the Prophet)—the covenant of Jehovah with the people of Israel was at once the manifestation of His special *grace* or *favour* to them; and the realization of its provisions constituted "*the beauty of the LORD their God upon them*." Their glory and beauty lay in their being "*a holy people unto the LORD*." He "*had not dealt so with any nation*." And the entire system of their ritual worship, especially when considered in its typical import, as "*the shadow of good things to come*," was full of both glory, and beauty, and divine loving-kindness.

The second staff was called "*Bands*:" and, since the breaking of it represented "*the breaking of the brotherhood between Judah and Israel*," it must itself have been, in the name given to it, *significant of that brotherhood*. This seems a natural and even necessary sequence. It symbolized the union of the tribes. The ancient severance of these, and the question whether their re-union took place at the return from Babylon, or is yet future, may come before us hereafter.

In the eighth verse—"Three shepherds also I cut off in

* The word is נָעִים. It is not of very frequent occurrence; and in other instances in our authorized version is rendered *pleasantness*; and the adjective נָעִים *pleasant*.—ED.

one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me,"—the reference of the first clause is dark. If it refers to *three individual persons*, it seems impossible, from anything recorded in history, to determine who are meant: certain conjectures of Jewish Rabbies and others being too absurd and too ridiculous to deserve serious mention. It is more likely that the designation "*three shepherds*" has reference to three *orders of persons* or offices, than to three individuals. And, if taken thus, by far the most reasonable interpretation is that which explains it of the three descriptions of rulers in the Jewish commonwealth—the priests, the scribes or teachers of the law, and the civil magistrates. "These," says a translator and critic, to whom frequent reference has been made, "were the persons of influence by whom the affairs of the nation were conducted, and to whose wickedness, which reached its culminating point when they crucified the Lord of glory, the destruction of the state is to be ascribed."

The "*one month*" is probably a definite for an indefinite expression, signifying merely a very short time; and that time, in all probability, the closing period of the siege of Jerusalem, when everything like order was broken up, and the entire Jewish polity dissolved.

The latter part of the verse appears to describe the loathing of the soul of the divine Shepherd, during the personal discharge of the functions of His ministry, in witnessing the fearful wickedness of both rulers, and scribes, and priests, and people. O how grievously—in a far higher sense and measure than could ever before be affirmed of the best men of their generation—must His righteous soul have been "vexed from day to day with their unlawful deeds!" All sin went to His very heart. He saw it, as it never was seen by man on earth since its entrance, in the full amount of its enormity: and then, to *His* view, who "knew what was *in* man," what a multiplicity and accumulation of evil, which none else could witness, was open! O what a *loathing* was that of *such* a soul—"holy, harmless, undefiled!"

We cannot wonder at what is added, "*Their soul also*

abhorred me." How could it be otherwise? Could pollution love holiness? Could worldliness love spirituality? Could the children of the devil love the Son of God—the image of "the Father that sent him?" Could hell love heaven? The unbelieving and rebellious Israelites of old said to their prophets, "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us." And the very same state of heart discovered itself in their loathing of Him who could say—"He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." "The world cannot hate *you*," was his language to his unbelieving and worldly kinsmen, "but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that its deeds are evil." He bore this testimony both in his teaching and in his example. His sinless life was a continual reproach to all the evil that was said and done around him. Their consciences could not but approve; but their hearts hated, the sinlessness which thus was ever condemning them.

We must now draw to a close. And the last of our observations suggests a question, which it may be profitable for every hearer to take home to his conscience, and make the ground of serious self-examination—the question which Jesus himself, though in a different connexion and with a different view, put once to *his* hearers—"What think *ye* of Christ?" Is it not a deeply affecting thought, that a character so perfect should have had it to say of the men of his day—among whom he dwelt, "going in and out among them," in the manifestation of all that was holy, and the unceasing practice of all that was benevolent, divinely holy, divinely benevolent,—"*Their soul abhorred me?*" What a fearful state of heart! He "grew up before them as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground: he was despised and rejected by them: they hid their faces from him: they saw no beauty in him, that they should desire him!" Is it so, my hearers, with any of *you*? Do you *loathe*, or do you *love*, the Saviour? *Loathe* him! do you say—and shrink and shudder at the thought? Then, if you profess to love him, we have two questions to ask you: *Why* do you love him? Do you love him only for *what he has done*, or do you love

him for *what he is*? Do you love him only because you expect to get forgiveness of your sins through his atonement, and so to escape hell? Or do you, along with this, discern his “beauty”—the moral and spiritual loveliness of his character? Instead of “hiding your faces from him,” do you delight to gaze on the all-perfect model of purity and love which that character sets before you? If you profess thus to love him, then my next question is—How do you *show your love*? The very men who lived in our Lord’s time made many professions. They called God their Father; and would have fired with indignation at being charged with hating him. Yet hate him they *did*; and showed it by hating his image in his Son. They said, “If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets:” and yet they did worse than their fathers; and shed blood infinitely more pure and more precious than that of the best of the prophets. If, then, you love Christ for what he has done for you—you will obey his will, and seek his glory: and if you love him for what he is, you will imitate him; you will long, and pray, and strive to be like him. If you are indeed of the flock of “the Good Shepherd,” you will HEAR HIS VOICE, AND FOLLOW HIM.

LECTURE XV.

ZECH. XL. 9—17.

"Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord. And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord. Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. And the Lord said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened."

THE language in the first of these verses is most affecting. It is the language of one whose patience was exhausted; who was weary of repenting; who heaves the sigh of mingled pity and indignation, and throws up his charge in hopelessness. It is language—considered as uttered by the "good Shepherd," by Immanuel—in full harmony with His language as recorded by the Evangelists:—"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers,

we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."* He who uttered these words clearly represents himself as having, through the whole period of the history of Israel that preceded his own coming, the divine superintendence of that people; and as now about to pursue the same gracious course of trial—putting the then existing generation to the same tests with their fathers, by which the very same character—the character which they so devoutly disowned—would be shown to be theirs as much as, or even more than, it was that of their fathers. The terms of this verse are a following-out of those in the *sixth*—"I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them."

He had borne long with them. He had wooed them,

and awed them; blessed and chastised them; instructed, admonished, entreated, reprovèd; loaded with good, corrected with evil; used all possible methods with them; so that with truth He could appeal to themselves, and say—"And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"* And what follows in Isaiah is in accordance with the words of Zechariah before us—"Now, go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up: and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry."† Such did their character continue, in spite of the very last and best means that could be expended upon them; when "God who, at sundry times and in diverse manners, had spoken to them by the prophets, spoke to them by his Son." Nay, the best means drew forth the worst manifestation of the character. That character is thus briefly and forcibly portrayed by Paul—"Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men: forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."‡ Hitherto Jehovah, in His merciful long-suffering, had said—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" But there was a limit to His forbearance. Here, He *does* "give them up." He *does* "deliver" them,—delivers them over to His three great avengers—the *pestilence* ("that

* Isa. v. 3, 4.

† Verses 5—7.

‡ 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

which is dying let it die"); the *sword* ("that which is being cut off let it be cut off"); and the *famine* ("let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.") He had ceased to be "the glory in the midst of them;" and He would no longer be "a wall of fire round about them." He would withdraw all protection, and give entrance and license to their enemies. Fearful was the fulfilment. Before those enemies forced admission, famine and pestilence, and mutual feuds among themselves, had done dreadful execution; and even the last most horrible ingredient in their sufferings, as their own historian testifies, was, to the letter, realized. So far back as the time of Moses, it had been predicted, with a particularity that harrows the very soul:—"And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the LORD thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee: so that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave: so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat; because he hath nothing left him in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee in all thy gates. The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter, and toward her young one that cometh out from between her feet, and toward her children which she shall bear: for she shall eat them for want of all things secretly in the siege and straitness, wherewith thine enemy shall distress thee in thy gates."* Other prophets too† had affectingly depicted the same scene of famished madness; and the terms of Jesus himself, in anticipating those days, were no exaggeration:—"Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the

* Deut. xxviii. 53—57.

† e. g. Jer. xix. 9.

beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be."

We have next (verses 10, 11,) a symbolical action, with its import:—"And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD."

The words express the *meaning* as well as the *act*. The breaking of this "crook" was significant of the dissolution, thus far, of the covenant with Israel. That covenant, as we have more than once had occasion to remark, was conditional. There were promises and engagements on Jehovah's part; but resting on certain expressed, and ever after repeated and implied, conditions on theirs;—conditions which they voluntarily pledged themselves to fulfil. Thus it was at the outset.* But they had egregiously, and all along, and many a time flagrantly, violated the conditions to which they had thus assented. And now the time was come, when they were to experience, more than ever before, the divine faithfulness to the threatenings of the covenant, as they had experienced the divine faithfulness to its promises. I am aware that the phrase, "My covenant *with all the people*" is, in the original, "with all the *peoples*," or *nations*;† and that critics are agreed that the same phrase is nowhere used for the *tribes of Israel*. It is understood as referring to the implied, or tacit, compact between Jehovah and all the nations by whom the safety and well-being of Israel could be, whether beneficially or injuriously, affected, that they should not "touch his prophets or do his people harm," except under commission from Himself. But who does not see, that this is only expressing, by a particular form of speech, one of the promissory provisions of the covenant with Israel,—namely, that the surrounding nations should be held under His restraint and control; so that they should have no power to harm them if they continued "willing and

* Comp. Exod. xix. 3—5; and xxiv. 3 and 7.

† כל־העמים.

obedient?" Jehovah gave promise of this from the first.* And if the "nations," when employed by Him as instruments of correction, gave indulgence to malice, and, with rigour and cruelty, "helped forward the affliction," He punished them for it afterward, and avenged the wrongs of His people. He now broke the bond of restraint, and gave uncontrolled license—the license of fire and sword, of slaughter and pillage, of desolation, dispersion, and bondage,—of every form of suffering—to their vengeful enemies; by whom the license was used and abused to the uttermost.

We can have no hesitation, from the connexion in which they stand, of the reference and the import of the words in the latter part of the eleventh verse:—"And so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord." The "*poor of the flock*" are those to whom the Saviour, "lifting up His eyes upon them," said—"Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God." They were "poor" in condition, and "poor" in spirit. And their "*knowing that it was the word of the Lord*," relates to the warning of coming calamity which the preceding verses contain,—a warning repeated by Jesus himself, and a cautionary injunction founded on it:—"When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand :) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:"†—"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."‡ They knew this to be the word of the Lord. It was imparted to their fellow disciples; believed, and obeyed. They escaped to a

* See for example, Deut. ii. 25; xi. 25; Exod. xxxiv. 24.

† Matt. xxiv. 15, 16.

‡ Luke xxi. 20—22.

place of security in the surrounding mountains, and were saved from the universal carnage and captivity.

The verses which follow have been the occasion of much discussion. Into all that has been written by critics and expositors, for clearing away the difficulties which are admitted to attend them, it would be quite out of place to enter. To many of you much of it would be unintelligible. We cannot read the verses, even were no reference made to them in the New Testament, without their calling to mind the facts as to the betrayal of Christ for the very same sum, and the use to which that sum was subsequently put:—"And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD." And how writes the Evangelist? "Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." * There are some predictions respecting the sufferings of Christ, which are singularly minute and specific; and their fulfilment accurate to the letter. There are others which, in the

* Matt. xxvii. 3—10.

midst of much that has no immediate relevancy to the facts of his life and death, contain allusions remote and obscure,—such as could not suggest any distinct idea of what was to take place, but which come to be understood when the events have actually transpired. The case now before us is one of these. Let us briefly glance at the chief difficulties connected with it.

1. The first we notice is the ascription of the words cited by the Evangelist to "*Jeremy* the prophet," instead of *Zechariah*. In the introductory lecture, we stated our conviction that the supposition of some that the latter portion of this book of Zechariah was really written by Jeremiah had no sufficient ground, if any at all, to support it. Setting this aside, the most probable of the remaining solutions of the difficulty seems to be, that the Evangelist *did not name the prophet at all*, but simply wrote—"Then was fulfilled that which was spoken *by the prophet*:" and that, the practice being to write names in a contracted form, the first translator of Matthew's Gospel from the Hebrew, in which it was written, into Greek—by the mistake of a single letter for another to which its resemblance is as close as it can well be without being the same—took the Hebrew word for "*by*," in the phrase "*by the prophet*," to be a contraction for "*by Jeremiah*;"* and that from that the error obtained currency. This conjecture is at once the simplest and most satisfactory. And it is rather remarkable, that it agrees with the practice of the Evangelist Matthew; who, in other places,† uses the phrase "*by the prophet*," and only in one or two instances introduces the name. There are, moreover, some manuscripts which are without any name; and more than one with the name of *Zechariah*.‡

2. The quotation, it is alleged, differs so much from the words of the Prophet, that it can hardly be supposed

* בִּירְמִיָּהוּ being the contraction for בִּיר הַנְּבִיא ; בִּיר הַנְּבִיא . Some of the other attempts at the solution of the difficulty will be found in Henderson's note; and in Hengstenberg's Christol, *in loc.*—ED.

† Chap. i. 22; ii. 5; ii. 15; xiii. 35; xxi. 4; xxvii. 35.

‡ For a list of them see Henderson's Note.—ED.

to have been taken from this place in Zechariah. As to this let it be specially noticed, that of the verse in Matthew, which at first appears to stand as if it were *all* a citation, part is really a *parenthesis* by the Evangelist, explanatory of his allusion in what he actually does quote. That parenthesis consists of the words "*The price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value:*" and a most natural one it is; referring to the transaction immediately preceding, in the Prophet, the words actually quoted. These words, omitting the parenthesis, are—"And they took the thirty pieces of silver, and gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me." This brings them much nearer to the Septuagint Greek; from which it is no uncommon thing for writers in the New Testament to quote:—about as near as in some other instances, in which the sense is given without exact regard to *verbal sameness*.

3. It is not denied that there are points of obvious diversity between the two transactions—that in the Prophet and that in the Evangelist. But there are points too of similarity; and in these the allusive type is to be considered as lying. The "*price*"—reward, or hire—given to the Prophet, in the vision, represented the slight value set upon his person and his official services. So did the same price, put upon the head of a greater than Zechariah or any of the prophets, testify the low value they set upon *him* and his divine, and divinely attested, ministrations and work. The identity of "the price;" the principle, or want of principle, shown in its pitiful diminutiveness; and the giving of each to "the potter"—are the chief points of resemblance, in which the treatment of the Prophet was a prophetic prefiguration of the treatment of Him "of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." However indirect and obscure the prefiguration might be, we are not to regard the reference by Matthew as a mere *accommodation*. There was in what befell the Prophet a designed foreshadowing of what in the future should befall the Prophet's Lord.

While the "cutting asunder" of the one "staff" or crook was a figure for the disruption between the infatuated nation and

their covenant God, the “cutting asunder” of the other was a figure for the disruption of the bonds of brotherhood amongst the people themselves:—verse 14. “Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.” Two things may be noticed here. *First*: I have more than once hinted at the possibility, and the probability, that the return from the captivity in Babylon was accompanied with the re-union of the ten tribes and the two—of “Judah and Israel,” or, as sometimes, “Judah and Ephraim:”—that is, that the restoration was not exclusively of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but that members of the other tribes were understood to be equally welcome; and that not a few of them did avail themselves of the opportunity of return from different quarters, at different intervals, and of re-settlement with their brethren. The verses before us appear to contain a somewhat satisfactory proof of this. “The brotherhood between Israel and Judah” had been “*broken*,” as far back as the days of Rehoboam. And, had there been no subsequent healing of the breach,—no subsequent re-union,—how could that “brotherhood” be again “broken,” either in the time of the Prophet, or in the prefigured time—the time of Christ, or the time of judgment that followed his unbelieving rejection?—*Secondly*: The “cutting asunder” of the “staff Bands”—signifying the breaking up of this “brotherhood”—had its melancholy counterpart in the alienations and animosities, the party feuds and fightings, the destruction of all rule, and the entire dismemberment of the Jewish community, both civil and ecclesiastical, at and after the destruction of their temple and their city. The internal dissensions and bloody frays were, according to Josephus, numerous and frightful; producing weakness, and making them a prey to their enemies, when the strength of union was so pre-eminently needful. The vessel of the Jewish commonwealth then foundered, and went to pieces, amidst the floods of divine vengeance; never to be refitted after the ancient model:—yet her timbers, as we may hereafter see, not lost, but to be brought again together, according to the model of the new and better era—

the era of the Messiah, and under the common flag of all peoples,—bearing the name and insignia, not of Moses, but of CHRIST.

Hitherto, the Prophet has been the representative, by anticipation, of the true “shepherd of the sheep;” even of Him, of whom Jehovah, in a subsequent chapter, says—“Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts; smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”* Now there is a change (verses 15—17)—“And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd: for, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.”

“*Foolishness*” is often, in the language of Scripture, synonymous with *wickedness*; or, at least, includes it. A “*foolish shepherd*” is, without doubt, not a mere ignorant and senseless, but an unprincipled and wicked shepherd, or ruler. The question naturally suggests itself, Is there here a reference to any particular individual? If there be, there is no one to whom the words might more reasonably be appropriated than to *Herod*. He was vain and profligate, passionate and cruel. The *time* seems to be that which elapsed between the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah and the final overthrow of the Jewish polity. And it was *then* that Herod set himself against the rising church, imbruing his hands in the blood of its apostolic leaders, and seeking, by measures of severity and coercion, to hinder its advancement. But his folly became manifest. Amid a scene of self-sufficient and self-glorious vanity, he was smitten of God, and “eaten of worms, he gave up the ghost.” It is not unlikely, however, as the seventeenth

* Chap. xiii. 7.

verse is evidently *general*, referring not to any one person but to *character*, and as the “woe” in the one verse seems to be denounced on the character described in the other, that the sixteenth is to be interpreted on a similar principle. There are three features in the character described. There is **NEGLIGENCE**,—“he shall not visit those that be cut off, nor seek the young one, nor heal the maimed, nor feed the standing-still for faintness;” that is, he should treat the flock—all the members of it, in all their varieties of condition—with unfeeling and utter neglect. There is **SELFISHNESS**,—“he shall eat the flesh of the fat”—the fat ones, that is; making all subservient to his own gratification and self-indulgence. And there is **CRUELTY**,—“he shall tear their claws,” or their hoofs “in pieces:” in sheer malice and ferocity, maiming, wounding, disabling them. This was not a just character of Herod only; there were many such negligent, selfish, cruel pretenders. “False Christs and false prophets” arose in those days of distraction, turbulence, and fear, who sought their own interest and their own glory, at whatever expense of privation, disappointment, and suffering to others. They were “*idol shepherds*.” From an idol being “vanity and a thing of nought,” the designation has been rendered “the *worthless shepherd*.” It may rather mean, however, the shepherd who gains to himself the confidence and homage of the people,—flattering them with delusive promises, and bringing them, in abject prostration, to his feet; but all for selfish ends: “leaving the flock,” as soon as these ends are gained, or as soon as any season of danger arrives,—leaving them when most they need help and protection, to provide for their life and safety as they may. Such were all the descriptions of pretended shepherds whom those times should produce as their deceivers and scourges, when, by the rejection of Messiah, they had cast off God, and God had judicially cast off them!

The “woe” pronounced is striking and impressive—“The sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.” “The sword” is the sword, doubtless, of the invading foe. The faithless shepherd shall be among its

surest victims. The "*arm*," which ought, as the emblem of power, to have been employed in defending the flock, shall be smitten, and "dried up":—he shall lose all power, not only for their protection, but, on account of his neglect of them, for his own. "His *right eye*," which, as the emblem of knowledge, and vigilance, and foresight, should have guided the flock, and been ever on the watchful look-out after every member of it, shall be "*utterly darkened*." Visited by a righteous God with judicial blindness, "he shall grope in the noon-day as in the night,"—"deceiving and being deceived;" and "shall utterly perish in his own delusions."

To conclude.—1. Let sinners recollect the solemn truth that the patience and forbearance of God have their limits. It was at an early period of the world's history that He said—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man." He fixed a time. He warned the rebels of those days by His Spirit speaking in Noah, the "preacher of righteousness." But they persisted in their perverse heedlessness. "They ate, they drank; they bought, they sold; they planted, they builded; they married, and were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark;" and then "the flood came, and swept them all away." Thus was it with the Jews. "God called, and they refused." He "stretched out his hands, but no man regarded: they would none of his counsel, they despised all his reproof." God "bore long with them;" but at length "the wrath came upon them to the uttermost." He could spare them no longer. The language of all this, and of much more of the same kind, is, to each one who is still ungodly and unconcerned—"TAKE HEED LEST HE ALSO SPARE NOT THEE." The limits of His forbearance are very varied. He tells none how long it is to last. Suppose that this night He should say of any of you who have long trifled with His grace, and refused to come under His yoke—"Let him alone:" "I will feed you no more: that that is dying *let it die*:" how sad would be your case! And are you quite secure that so it is not to be?—that this day may not be the last of God's for-

bearance with you?—that He may not, ere its sun go down, give you up,—“swear, in his wrath, they shall not enter into my rest?” “TO-DAY, then, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”*

2. If such a “woe” hung over negligent, unfaithful, unfeeling, selfish shepherds, under the old economy, how weightily ought *they* to feel their responsibility, to whom, under the new, Christ says—“Feed my sheep; feed my lambs?” For our sakes and for your own, pray for us, that we may “have grace to be faithful;” that we may not, by *unfaithfulness*, bring upon ourselves the frown and rejection of the Divine Master; that we may not bring upon us the imprecations, instead of the blessings, of the souls that have been under our care; that our “arm be not withered,” nor our “eye darkened,” for not having duly guarded and guided the flock; that we may not, “having preached to others, ourselves be cast away!” We feel we can, without presumption, adopt the modest language of an apostle—“We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly;” holding in merited abhorrence the character of the “idol-shepherd,” who courts homage for selfish and secular ends; desiring to be the idol of others, because he is his own, and because their homage is substantially productive. But O to be found, in all other respects, free from the charge of the blood of souls!—to be able, by soundness of doctrine, faithfulness of admonition, watchfulness of care, impartiality of discipline, and consistency of example, to say with the same apostle, “We are pure from the blood of all men. For we have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God!” Again I say, “BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US!”

* Compare Heb. ii. 2—4.

LECTURE XVI.

ZECH. XII. 1—9.

“The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. In that day, saith the Lord, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness; and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the Lord of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left; and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The Lord also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

WE have had the restoration of Israel in the latter part of the tenth chapter. We have had the means of their overthrow and dispersion, from which that restoration is to be effected, in the eleventh. In chapter twelfth, the subject of the restoration is resumed; and in the verses just read there is specially brought before us what the Jews will be, under divine protection and favour, to their enemies, when the period of their restoration has arrived. *Unfulfilled prophecy*

—as we had occasion, in introducing this Book, to remark, is necessarily obscure. It is so of set purpose, to avoid at once collusion to accomplish, and combination to hinder. It becomes us, therefore, on every part of such a field, to tread with caution. We must neither be too confident in our decisions, nor too minute in our details. It is better for us, if we can arrive at the general tenor of the predicted events, to leave the details to be unfolded by the actual fulfilment. It is only when the fulfilment takes place, that a prophecy becomes a proof of divine inspiration and authority: and, when the comparison comes to be made between the prediction and the facts, the more minute, and exact, and extensive the correspondence, the more striking and conclusive becomes the proof.

The word translated "*burden*" in the first verse Dr. Henderson renders, as in the first verse of the ninth chapter, simply sentence. "The *sentence* of the word of the LORD concerning Israel." If the word "*burden*" is retained, and is understood to mean a *sentence* of judicial vengeance, then we must retain also the preposition "*for*." The judgment is not against Israel, but in Israel's behalf, and *against* their enemies. And with this the entire context agrees. And observe the character given by Jehovah of himself, and the connexion in which it stands:—"saith Jehovah, who stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." The idea intended to be conveyed is evidently the *omnipotent supremacy* of Jehovah. He who hath "stretched forth the heavens" has power over the heavens. He who has "laid the foundation of the earth" has power over the earth which He has framed and founded. The heavens and the earth are a common phrase for *the universe*; "the heavens" being understood as including "all their hosts." The meaning thus far is, that the resources of the universe are at the disposal of Him who predicts the events which follow,—who gives these promissory assurances to His people. To this there is added—"And formeth the spirit of man within him." On the same principle, He must possess over the spirits He has thus formed complete control. What

wisdom, what skill, what energy, individual or combined, which those spirits may possess, can avail to thwart or impede any purpose of His? "He has the hearts of all men in his hand: as the rivers of water, he turneth them whithersoever he will." And of these human spirits none could withstand His wrath: could for a moment live before it: "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth, for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls *which I have made*."* The language, as that of divine majesty, supremacy, authority, power, is designed to impart to those interested confidence in what He was about to say;—to encourage them, even in circumstances in which their case might seem to be hopeless, and in which, therefore, they might be tempted to ask, "How can these things be?" Let us take home the lesson; and in regard to whatever in the form of promise or of threatening, is predicted in this book, never forget that "with God"—with Him who "stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him," "nothing shall be impossible."

In applying the terms of the verses read to the Jews nationally, and in their literal meaning, I cannot say I feel any hesitation. The attempts which have been made to *spiritualize* them,—to interpret them, figuratively, as meaning only their individual, though general conversion, and their incorporation with the New Testament Church, and their participation of its privileges and blessings and hopes,—appear to me so exceedingly unnatural and forced, that I cannot at all acquiesce in them. As a specimen of what I mean, let me quote from Matthew Henry the comment on the latter part of the sixth verse, last clause—"and Jerusalem shall be inhabited in her own place, even in Jerusalem:" "It is promised that Jerusalem shall be re-peopled and replenished. The natives of Jerusalem shall not incorporate in a colony in some other country, and build a city there, and call that *Jerusalem*, and see the promises fulfilled in that, as those in

* Isa. lvii. 16.

New England called their towns by the names of towns in Old England. No: they shall have a *new Jerusalem* upon the same foundation, the same spot of ground, with the old one." Now, had the excellent commentator stopped here, he would, I am persuaded, have given the just sense. But mark what he adds:—"They had so after their return out of captivity: but *this was to have its full accomplishment in the Gospel Church; which is a Jerusalem inhabited IN ITS OWN PLACE: for, the Gospel being to be preached to all the world, it may call every place ITS OWN.*" When he thus interprets, I demur. I cannot bring myself to the conviction, that terms so very pointed, explicit, and strong, as to the re-building and re-inhabiting of Jerusalem are to be understood as receiving their accomplishment in the spiritual incorporation, by conversion, of the scattered Jews with the Christian Church, as having been symbolized by the ancient city;—to consider, in one word, the drift of this entire passage to be the security and prosperity and final triumph of the *New Testament Church*. It is true that no opposition of its enemies, single or combined, shall prove successful. But this does not seem to be the truth (important as it is, and interesting to every Christian mind) here taught. The passage refers to THE JEWS—to their own land, and their own city, and their future re-establishment in both.

Do not imagine that I attach any force to the Jewish objection, which, in the form of a sarcastic taunt, they offer to all spiritualizing:—"You, Gentiles," they say, "are very fond of interpreting all the *curses* that relate to us Jews *literally*, and all the *promises* *spiritually*." Without entering into any inquiry as to the extent of the *truth* of this charge,—supposing it ever so well-founded, I attach no force to it, for a very obvious reason,—namely, that, in so interpreting, we should, in fact, be putting upon the curses and the promises alike the interpretation which is in reality *the most favourable* to the Jews. Nothing but their worldly-mindedness, inherited by them from their fathers, and manifested in all their anticipations of a temporal kingdom,

with temporal honours and blessings, resting on their misinterpretations of God's promises by the Prophets,—nothing but this could dictate such an objection. For, assuredly, in interpreting the curses literally, and the blessings spiritually, we interpret the one as including a less fearful description of evil than if we explained them spiritually; and the other as including a much more precious description of good, than if we explained them literally. That *they* should estimate more highly, and covet more earnestly, *temporal* than *spiritual* blessings, will not prove the one to be really more valuable than the other. The preference arises only from the earthly and sensual propensities of their nature,—a nature which is not Jewish alone, but Gentile as well. I rest my objection on no such ground, but on the unnatural constraint and forcing which such spiritualizing requires; and upon other more general considerations, which will come to be stated hereafter.

We shall first of all, then, take up the verses read in what appears to be the only meaning they can, without torturing, be made to bear. And especially, when they are taken in connexion with the end of chapter tenth; where Jehovah is represented, without precisely pointing to the *means* or *agencies*, as gathering them out of all quarters to which they had been scattered, and bringing them to their own land. In the passage now before us, they appear as having been thus gathered, and as having obtained possession. Then comes the scene which is here so graphically and forcibly depicted:—"Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."*

There are here *two figures employed*. The first is—"The Lord shall make Jerusalem *a cup of trembling*;" or, as it is rendered by some, *of intoxication*. It seems to mean a

* Verses 2, 3.

cup that should at once *madden* and *stupidify*; that should at the first excite to rage; rage such as deprived of self-possession and forethought, and precaution, and that should afterwards leave those who drank of it in exhaustion and stupor, the helpless prey of the vengeance of them whom they had so furiously assailed. God would, (by what means is not said,) send upon all who should set themselves against Jerusalem, a spirit at once of exasperation and frenzy, and of infatuation and distraction, like that of the man who, by the influence of intoxicating drink, is stirred to madness, and is incapacitated for all sober, well-directed, and consistent action. And this is predicted to be general,—to come “upon all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege against Judah and Jerusalem.” All their attempts should thus fail, bringing shame and discomfiture upon themselves.

The other figure is—“I will make Jerusalem a *burden-some stone for all people*; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.”* Different critics and commentators agree in considering this as an allusion to a particular custom. “Jerome,” says Dr. Henderson, “mentions it as a custom which still obtained, in his time, in Palestine, for young men to try their strength, by lifting enormous stones so high from the ground as to place them upon their heads. It may be from such an exercise, that the metaphor is borrowed.” “This alludes,” says Scott, “to large stones, or weights, which men used to try their strength by lifting; which sometimes, proving too heavy for them, bruised, or even killed, them. Thus, all who attempted to injure Jerusalem would destroy themselves; even though all people of the earth should gather themselves against it.” They should try to overcome and crush Jerusalem: but Jerusalem would crush *them*.

Some have tried to give this a purely figurative sense; and to find its fulfilment in the spiritual victories of those

“good soldiers of Jesus Christ” who went out from Jerusalem; and to the divine judgments on their opponents and persecutors. But such an interpretation could be dictated only by an over-eager desire to have every thing pertaining to New Testament times *spiritual*. The former part of it is specially unhappy: the victories of the Apostles and other champions of the Cross, from Jerusalem, being such victories as brought those who were subdued into a *better* state than that in which they had been before. They were conquered, not to be destroyed, but to be, in the highest sense, saved and blessed; and, as to vengeance on their persecutors, they were not at all the instruments of its infliction. The latter consideration, it is true, however, would not be conclusive; seeing they might be represented as bringing it upon those who set themselves against them, if it was inflicted, in what way or by what agency soever, *on their account*. And Jerusalem—even adopting the literal interpretation—might be called a “cup of trembling” and “a burdensome stone” to its besiegers, although its inhabitants should not themselves be the immediate agents in their overthrow and destruction. But the former consideration is decisive.

Some again, understanding Jerusalem, and the assault upon it, *literally*,—conceive the prediction to have received its accomplishment in the days of the Maccabees; in their victories over Antiochus. There are, however, *two* conclusive considerations against such a gloss. The first, that the language altogether is *much too strong* for aught that happened under the generalship of the Maccabean princes; so strong, especially when the next verses are also taken in, as, in such an application, to be, for their extravagance, next to ludicrous: and the second, that in the passage before us Jerusalem is represented as *laid under siege*; whereas, Antiochus never besieged the city at all. We are satisfied, then, that the events predicted are both *future* and *literal*.

The figures are, in verse fourth, followed up by plainer representations. It expresses *two* things. First, *divine*

favour to Judah. This is evidently what is meant by the words in the latter part of the verse—"I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah:" rendered by Dr. Henderson, "upon the house of Judah will I *keep mine eyes open*;" which renders the *favourable* character of the look more manifest. The language is clearly to be understood in the same sense as when it is said, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous:" And, indeed, the very phrase is employed to express the gracious regard of Jehovah for the land of Israel: Moses saying of it—"A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."

Then, secondly, this favour to Judah was to be displayed in the infatuation, confusion, and discomfiture of Judah's enemies:—"I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness." The horses—that is of the cavalry of the enemy's army,—should be rendered unmanageable by their riders, and thus a hindrance rather than a help: and the riders themselves should, by the operation of unexplained causes, all under divine control, be utterly deprived of self-possession, foresight, and discretion,—getting entangled one with another, and rushing recklessly on ruin. In perfect contrast to this account of their enemies, we have in verse *fifth* the assurance—"The governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God." Observe here the *confidence of the leaders in the people*. Without the people's concurrent aid, their counsels, and plans, and directions, could, of course, be of little avail. This the rulers should feel; and should exult in seeing what ground they had for full reliance on them in the time of pressure and danger: which implies unanimity, and intrepid valour, and combined and persevering effort, on the part of the inhabitants. This union and valour would be the "*strength*" of their leaders; without which they must find themselves

utterly powerless. A divided, dispirited, heartless, dastardly soldiery or populace is weakness, disappointment, and discomfiture to the best conceived plans of the most bold, prudent, and experienced leaders. And *whence* was this union and valour of the people, and consequent strength of their leaders, *to come?* The question is answered. It was found "*in the Lord of hosts, their God.*" And the import of this may be, not merely that whatever, either in mental character or in outward circumstances, contributes to any successful result, should be regarded as, directly or indirectly, springing from a divine source; but that the fulfilment thus far of the divine promises, in their gathering from the nations among whom they had so long been scattered, would inspire confidence in Jehovah who had thus returned to them in mercy. And this confidence, shared alike by governors and people, would be the union and valour of the one, and the "strength"—the felt security and assured success—of the other.

We might have observed, that no account is given of the previous circumstances which should lead to such a general combination of the peoples of different countries against Jerusalem. That it will be by a divine interposition, inclining the hearts of the communities and governments of the nations favourably towards them, and disposing them to forward their return, and aid them in effecting it, that it will be ultimately accomplished, we have every reason to believe. *How* it is afterwards to come to pass that the hearts of the nations are again to turn against them, we have no information; and conjecture is vain. One thing, however, it may be right to remark, that among the many nations among whom they have been dispersed, the Jews have been the subjects of a large amount and variety of suffering; not of mere scorn and contumely, and degradation, and exclusion, and proscription, but of real, palpable oppression, privation, outrage, cruelty, and massacre. Though all this has been only the fulfilment of divine prophetic threatenings,—the execution, by the instrumentality

of these nations, of the judicial vengeance of a righteous God, —yet they by whom it has been inflicted have not been the less guilty. Vengeance may await *them* next. They must be punished in their turn. We had this principle before us last Lord's day, in the instance of the king of Assyria, when he had been employed by divine providence in punishing the people of Israel for their rebellions and idolatries. Mark the language of Jehovah, by the Prophet:—"Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem. I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."* May not the same principle, then, be in operation in the future period of which we are now speaking? And may it not be the purpose of Jehovah, in avenging His people of those who, when He was wroth, had taken pleasure in "helping forward the affliction," to render that vengeance the more signal, by gathering the nations against Jerusalem, and on the very spot where He shows favour to His people, making those who have afflicted them feel the lighting down of His arm? Thus will the manifestation of His *faithfulness* be complete. Having for many centuries made His outcast people experience His fidelity to prophetic denunciations against them; He will show himself also, in their happy experience, true to all His promises; and then further faithful in the execution of threatened vengeance on those that hated and oppressed them. He will do this before their eyes; and make them the instruments of the righteous penalty!

The consequence of what has been stated in verses fourth and fifth follows in the next verse—"In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem." "The governors of Judah" mean here—the governors of Judah thus supported and backed by

* Isa. x. 12.

a united and brave people, confiding in Jehovah their God. The connexion shows this. It is when they are represented as having, and expressing this confidence, that what is here said of them is introduced—“*in that day.*” Mark the strikingly expressive similitude employed!—“*like a hearth of fire*” (or a fire-pot) “*among wood, or like a torch of fire in a sheaf.*” What could more impressively convey the idea of overthrow and destruction, at once easily and completely effected! It cannot be otherwise than that the fire-pot should at once kindle and consume the sticks of wood, and the torch of fire the dry sheaf. As easily and as completely would the forces of the nations be consumed by the people whom Jehovah favoured, and whose cause He espoused. With Him on their side, how could it fail? And this question suggests the inquiry, Who makes them what they are thus described to be? “In that day, *will I make* the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf.” It is Jehovah that speaks. He would at once fit the enemy for destruction, and the instruments for effecting their extermination. On both sides it is represented as *His* doing. He infatuates, weakens, exposes the enemy; and He whets against him the avenging sword, and strengthens the arm that wields it. As the fire consumes the wood and the sheaf of straw, so should the leaders and inhabitants of Jerusalem “devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left.” And then follows the settled result:—“and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again, in her own place, even in Jerusalem.” The terms I cannot but regard as studiously emphatic. It shall not be a new city, in some new territory; but Jerusalem—the city of their fathers—the city of their God; on the same spot; hallowed by all the ancient associations of their history and their religion. The language pointedly and strongly expresses re-occupancy, and permanent possession. The *permanence* we may hereafter have occasion more particularly to notice, as one of the circumstances which serve to settle the question respecting certain prophecies, whether they refer to the *return from Babylon* or to a *return yet future*. The *reality*

of the rebuilding and re-occupancy of the city at that future period appears to be strongly implied in the prophetic words of our Lord himself—"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* I would not go so far as to say that the use of this word "*until*," renders it absolutely sure that at the period designated by the "fulfilling of the times of the Gentiles," Jerusalem shall be trodden down no longer: but most certainly this is the natural conclusion from the form of expression.†

Verse 7. "The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah." He had spoken of "*Jerusalem*"—of the *city*, but what was to become of the *country*, and the inhabitants of the country? Were they to be abandoned to the desolating fury of the foe? No, answers the Prophet: "the LORD shall save *the tents of Judah first*." The country population were most exposed, and most helpless. They stood more immediately in need of protection than even the inhabitants of the city: and they should have it *first*. And what is the reason assigned for Jehovah's taking them under special protection? They might by the inhabitants of the city be regarded as of less consequence. They should not be so esteemed by Jehovah. They were as truly a part of His people as the citizens of Jerusalem. Their very helplessness called the more imperatively for divine interposition. They should not be neglected. Jehovah would care for them; and would make His care of them conspicuous; for the reason assigned—"that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah." "The *tents* of Judah" are probably intended to be set in contrast with the palaces of the royal house, and the "ceiled houses" of the grandees and the men

* Luke xxi. 24.

† Comp. Lecture xvii., p. 295, &c.—Ed.

of wealth. And God would show favour to *them*, for the purpose of teaching the great men—the men of royal station, of influence and riches,—a lesson of humble-mindedness; that they might not be “lifted up with pride;”—might not despise the poor;—might not be partial in the exercise of their authority; but might imitate the divine example, extending their concern to the lowest as well as the highest classes of their people. Thus it ought to be in every community, whether civil or ecclesiastical. God himself sets the example. He “resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the lowly.” It was His purpose that all classes of His people should feel themselves one; one in privilege, one in divine impartial favour; that there should be no disrespect of the high on the part of the low, nor any contempt of the low on the part of the high. And while thus it was to be in Judea, (and thus it ought to be in every civil community), thus, above all, ought it to be in the Church of God—the spiritual community of the faithful.*

But, while “the LORD will save the tents of Judah *first*,” it will not, on the other hand, be to the overlooking of the city: verse 8—“In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.” We have here both the assurance of defence, and *the way* in which the defence is to be afforded. Whatever extraordinary and marked manifestations there may be of divine interposition, the defence is here represented as effected by *enabling them to defend themselves*. The terms are strong: “he that is feeble among them shall be *as David* ;”—David, who, when but a stripling a ruddy youth, defied and slew the champion of the Philistian host, and delivered the armies of the living God; and who, throughout his reign, showed himself, relying on Jehovah, so intrepid and fearless a warrior: “and the house of David *as God, as the angel of the Lord before them*.” Some have understood the plural

* Compare Jam. ii. 1—9.

name of *God* as here denoting *angels*; because in some instances it happens to be so rendered by the Seventy in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. But the remark of Dr. Henderson is most just:—"What clearly shows that no such idea can attach to the word in this place, is the corrective phrase—'*as the angel of Jehovah*,' immediately following. The house of David was to be '*as God*;' yet not as God in the abstract, of which no proper conception can be formed; but as God manifested to men in his glorious forthcomings under the ancient dispensation, in the divine person of the Son, who went before the children of Israel as their divine leader and protector; and to whom are vindicated the sum total of the divine perfections." The general meaning is, that the Lord God will strengthen the weakest, and give additional elevation, honour, and influence to the highest,—and add divinely to the might of the mightiest: so that no opposing power shall ever stand before them: any more than when that divine Angel of the Covenant was commissioned to be their conductor and guardian, of whom Jehovah said—"MY NAME IS IN HIM."

Verse 9. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." This mode of expression as used by the Divine Being, is somewhat singular. It is not designed, of course, to intimate *uncertainty* of the result, if Jehovah *sought* to effect it. He speaks "after the manner of men." And perhaps the intended meaning may be, that He would not *annihilate* (as by a volition He could) the enemies of Jerusalem; but that He would so alarm and discomfit and destroy, as to make it manifest, that if they persisted in their infatuated attempt, annihilation *must* be the issue. With such general hints we must satisfy ourselves. We dare not presume to think of making out a future narrative from an unfulfilled prophecy. We must leave "the day to declare" the full import.

The passage, though appropriate to the one subject of the future restoration of Israel, yet contains in it *principles* which may fairly and profitably be applied to others.

So far as respects the unfailing certainty of execution or fulfilment, all without exception that God says in His word might be prefaced with the same terms—"Thus saith Jehovah, who stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundations of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." He is the omnipotent God. Nothing that He promises can fail of accomplishment to those who put their trust in Him: nothing that He threatens can fail of execution against those who disbelieve, disregard, and disobey Him. Let the assurance be applied to all God's promises. There are promises to the Church in New Testament times as well as to the ancient people of divine favour and choice. We may rest in the confidence that that Church is safe; that "no weapon formed against her shall prosper, that every tongue that riseth against her shall be ashamed:" that the promise will be verified to the end, as it has been verified hitherto—"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour:"* that all her enemies shall ultimately be discomfited and ashamed: that all the glorious anticipations of her millennial triumph, prosperity, and blessedness, shall be fully realized. Nothing can fail from want of power; nor can any thing from want of faithfulness and love.

And many are the promises to God's people *individually*, on which He has "caused them to hope." He will "never leave them nor forsake them." With Him who gives the assurances in the passage before us "there is everlasting strength." And that strength, in all the forms and in all the circumstances in which it can be needed, He has pledged himself to supply to them that ask it. He says—and says with evident comprehensiveness of *all* His people:—"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid

* Isa. xliii. 2, 3.

from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint." *

Let careless sinners beware, lest by their negligence, unbelief, and disobedience, they convert into "*burdens*"—into sentences of judgment,—into grounds of righteous condemnation,—those "words of the Lord" that are meant for salvation,—for deliverance from the crushing and overwhelming weight of His curse. His word is *for* all who receive it; and *against* all who reject it. The Gospel proclaims grace and salvation. Those who accept it shall find all that it offers—pardon, peace, purity, life eternal. But it will, to those who trifle with it and refuse it, become the heaviest of "*burdens*." O remember, sinner, that nothing will sink you deeper in perdition than GOD'S REJECTED MERCY.

* Isa. xl. 27—31.

LECTURE XVII.

ZECH. XII. 10—14.

“ And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.”

WE shall not be able to enter on the proper exposition of these verses in the present Lecture; as we purpose taking a brief view of the argument on the question, whether the prophecies which relate to God's future visitation of His ancient people are to be interpreted *altogether spiritually*, as predicting simply their *conversion* to the faith of Jesus; or *partly spiritually and partly temporally*, as predicting at once their *general conversion as individuals*, and their *national restoration to their own land*. I have more than once already intimated my conviction that *the latter* is the true interpretation. The point, however, considered not in relation to this passage merely but as a general one, has been disputed. And it must not be denied that some of the objections to the literal, and some of the reasonings in support of the spiritual exposition, are far from being without

their strength. The question is not one about which we feel at all disposed to "contend earnestly," as we should for "the faith once delivered to the saints,"—the truths connected with salvation. Yet in different aspects of it it is far from being devoid of interest. And, although the most satisfactory expositor of unfulfilled prophecies will be *Time*; there can be no presumption in our looking at the terms of the predictions themselves, and considering what, according to their seemingly fair and unconstrained explanation, they lead us to anticipate.

I lay a good deal of stress upon the plain and pointed terms of the close of the sixth verse—"And Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem." Render the original terms as you will, they are full of emphasis: and to interpret Jerusalem of the whole earth, or equally of any place upon it, because the *spiritual Jerusalem* exists wherever there are converts to the faith of Christ and subjects of His kingdom, appears to me, as I formerly said, a straining altogether inadmissible. In speaking on this part of the passage, I referred, in last Lecture, to the remarkable words of Jesus, as recorded by the Evangelist Luke:—"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" and made the observation:—"I would not go so far as to say, that the use of this word '*until*' renders it absolutely sure that, at the period designated the '*fulfilling* of the times of the Gentiles,' Jerusalem shall be trodden down no longer. But certainly such is the most natural conclusion from the form of expression."

I had not then seen the following remarks on this very point. They occur in a little work, of considerable ingenuity and plausibility, entitled—"Objections to the doctrine of Israel's future restoration to Palestine." To take off the force of the conclusion from the use of the word "*until*," as implying that *then* there will be a change,—that Jerusalem shall no longer be trodden down, but shall rise again from its ruins, the author says:—"Compare the passage with

Genesis xxviii. 15; 1 Sam. xv. 35; Rom. v. 13; Mark xiv. 25; and Matt. v. 18. The Lord says to Jacob, 'I will not leave thee *until* I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.' Did the Lord mean to say he would leave him *then*? 'And Samuel came no more to see Saul, *until* the day of his death.' Did he come *then*? '*Until* the law, sin was in the world.' Did sin leave the world, when the law came? Christ, at the last supper, said—'I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, *until* that day that I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God.' Did Christ mean, that in the kingdom of God he would literally drink of the fruit of the vine? Jesus said, '*Till* heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.' Did he mean to say that when heaven and earth passed, the holy law of God should be dishonoured? These quotations sufficiently show, that the word '*until*' does not always imply limitation or alteration; much less the exact and literal recurrence of a former circumstance."* On this we observe—

1. We have not pretended to say, that in every instance in which the word is used the use of it implies the same thing. But it always implies *something or other* as taking place when the period closes. Thus, when God says to Jacob—"I will not leave thee, *until* I have done that which I have spoken to thee of," it implies that *then*, "that which God had spoken to him of" *should* be fully done,—and his condition that which God had promised him. When it is said of Samuel that he "came no more to see Saul *until* the day of his death," it implies that *then* there was such a change as rendered further intercourse impossible; it ceased to be matter of *will*. When the Apostle says, "*Until* the law sin was in the world," his words *cannot* be understood to mean that "sin left the world when the law came:" for that there *was* sin *after* the law—that is the formal giving of the law to Israel is the very point assumed; and the question was whether sin *began* then, or whether

till that period there had been *no* sin. He proves, from the fact of the prevalence of *death*, that from the beginning, and all along *till* the giving of the law—that is, *as well as after it*, there was sin, and consequently a *law* of which sin was the transgression. When Christ said—"I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine *until* that day when I drink it new with you in the kingdom of heaven,"—the instance is an unfortunate one for the purpose for which it is adduced; for although it is *not* meant that *then* he should drink *literally* of the fruit of the vine,—it *is* meant, beyond all question, that *in the sense in which he used the expression* he *should* drink of it, when he had finished his work and begun his kingdom: he was to have *no joy*—nothing but suffering—nothing but a cup of woe—*till then*; and that *then* there should be a change—a reverse; then he should have joy—new and endless joy,—and joy of which they—his disciples—should partake. And when it is said, "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"—instead of meaning that *when* heaven and earth passed the law should be dishonoured, the meaning is precisely the reverse,—that the law, till the end of the world, and for ever, should stand forth in all the glory of its fulfilled and honoured requirements. For observe, there are two *tills*—"till heaven and earth pass"—and "*till* all be fulfilled." How, then, *could* the law be dishonoured by having been *all fulfilled*? It was thus permanently established and magnified.

2. It cannot be disputed, that, when any state of things is spoken of as *to continue until* a certain time, or the coming of a certain event, the natural inference is, that *then* there should be a change; and, if the nature of the change is not expressly specified, that it should be a *reversal* of the previously existing state. On this principle, it cannot fail to occur to every reader of our Lord's words, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled,"—that *then*—when the time thus designated (no matter what the precise meaning of the designation may be) shall arrive, Jerusalem should no longer

be trodden down of the Gentiles; and the further conclusion suggests itself, as almost certainly included, that it should again rise from its ruined condition, and again become the habitation of a restored people,—should revert to those who, when the words were spoken, were just about to be dispossessed. Accordingly—

3. The writer himself is constrained to admit, in the very sense put by him on the words, that the “until” *does* indicate a change. He will not allow that change to be the restoration of the city to its former people, because he conceives such a view to be inconsistent with the spiritual genius of Christianity and the kingdom of Christ—(a position to be examined by and by); but still it *is* a change. He says, “I take the passage to be fairly paraphrased as follows:—‘The day of Jerusalem’s sorrows is approaching; the armies of its desolators draw nigh, and soon its destruction will be accomplished; and it shall never cease to be desolate and oppressed *until* the blessed period arrive when the Gentiles shall oppress no more, and when *all* lands shall rejoice and blossom as the rose.’” Even in this paraphrase, the word *until* has the meaning we have given it,—that, namely, of a change; and even a reversal: the city should *no more* be “desolate and oppressed,” and the *land*—considered as included with and represented by it, should “rejoice and blossom as the rose.” But, to make his argument of any worth, the “until” ought not to denote a change *at all*. He conceives the change will be quite adequate to the expression, if Jerusalem and Judea shall be occupied by a *Christian* population, whatsoever, in nationality, they may be,—these being *the Israel* of the New Testament dispensation. I demur to this. The “until” relates, I apprehend, not only to the treading down of the city, but to the previously mentioned dispersion of its inhabitants. Mark it. It is commonly taken as if the latter part of our Lord’s words were a sentence by themselves—“And Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” Thus the “until” is made to refer exclusively to the *state of the city*. But why should it not go further

back? Our Lord's words are—"They shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, *until* the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." Has the "*until*" an *exclusive* reference to the treading down of the city—and *none* to the dispersion and captivity of the people? Is it not natural to understand it, as relating both to the one and to the other—and to both in their natural relation to each other; the cessation of the dispersion and captivity of the people by their ingathering to the restored city—the city of their fathers? It does not, I confess, seem to me, by any means, natural, to interpret Christ's words as meaning that *the people*, of whom and of whose city he speaks, were then to *cease to be a people* altogether; that in their conversion they should be incorporated, in all the places where they have been scattered, with the Christianized Gentile world, so as no longer to be recognized *as the seed of Abraham* at all. Incomparably the more natural interpretation, in my judgment, is—that when "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," the people shall be restored from their degradation and dispersion, and the city from its long desolations for their reception and inhabitation. Observe—

4. This writer is constrained to adopt on other occasions, remarkably similar, the very meaning of the word "*until*" for which we contend. He quotes the prophecy of Jacob—"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, *until* Shiloh come:" and on the words he thus comments:—"A prophecy had long been familiar to the Jews, in which a period was explicitly announced (as the fulfilment proved, however they might understand the promise) when the sceptre *should* depart from Judah." Sensible of the seeming inconsistency, he thus, in a note, explains:—"It will no doubt be observed,—and I do not wish to evade the observation,—that I have attributed a meaning to the word '*until*' in this instance, which I have refused to admit in a former one—'*until* the times of the Gentiles.' But in the present case, the sense is fixed by the event:—'*until* Shiloh come,' the tribual dignity and jurisdiction of Judah

remained. Shiloh came; and the sceptre of authority departed. Whereas, in the former case, the sense is not fixed by any event: and I am, therefore, perfectly consistent in assigning that interpretation to the word which appears to me most agreeable to the general tenor of Scripture, and which is shown to be probably true by the texts quoted in its support.* Now I grant at once, that if we are shut up to a different interpretation in the one case from that which holds in the other by "the general tenor of Scripture," we must bow to the necessity thus laid upon us. And this just limits our inquiry to one point—whether we *are* so shut up. For every one must see, that, in as far as the simple question is concerned as to the proper import of the word "*until*," the very *fixing of the meaning by the event* in the one case leads us to anticipate the fixing of a similar meaning by the coming event in the other. If the event has shown that the prediction—"the sceptre shall not depart from Judah *until* Shiloh come"—meant that *then* the sceptre should depart; then, so far as the meaning of the term goes, the prediction—"they shall be led away captive into all nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled" ought to mean, that *then* the people and the city should be alike recovered, the one from their dispersion, and the other from its desolations; the city rebuilt for the people—the people restored to the city.

I have dwelt the more particularly on this passage, because of its importance in the discussion; as being a prediction from the very lips of the Saviour himself.—I only add on the meaning of "*until*," that the sense we put upon it is confirmed by such passages on the same subject as Rom. xi. 25—"For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in." Who ever doubts, on reading these words, that *when* "the fulness of the Gentiles comes

in," the "blindness that is happened to Israel" shall cease?—that "the vail shall be taken from their hearts," and they shall be spiritually enlightened? The same principle of interpretation, applied in the other case, leads us directly to the conclusion at which we have arrived.

What we now propose, in the first place, is to select a few out of many prophetic passages respecting the restoration of the Jewish people: and in doing this, to make it clear to you, that such as we do select have reference, not to the restoration from the Babylonish captivity, but to a restoration yet future. And, when we have done this, then will come the question, Is the language to be interpreted *all spiritually*, or *partly spiritually and partly literally*? In other words, Does all that is written denote *only their conversion without their national restoration*, or does it comprehend *both*? And then the subsequent question, If both, *which first*—their conversion, or their restoration?

The prophetic passages of which we speak are of *two descriptions*. Some evidently predict *their conversion* alone. It is not with these so much—I might say not with these *at all*—that we have at present to do: for about them there is no dispute. The difference of judgment, among interpreters of prophecy, is simply about their *national restoration*. I may, however, as a specimen of the former class of passages, present one from the Old Testament, and one from the New:

That from the Old Testament is Hosea iii. 4, 5—"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and David their king; and shall fear the LORD and his goodness in the latter days."

I enter into no detail. The condition depicted is that of this people without their national government; without their temple-worship and sacrificial observances, and, at the same time, keeping free from what they had all along been

so addicted to,—the practice of *idolatry*. This corresponds perfectly with the present state of the Jewish people. Should it be surmised that it corresponds also with their state during the ancient captivity; let it be noticed,—that the expression “*many days*” seems to indicate a longer period than seventy years; and, especially, that the phrase used for the time of their return to God—“*in the latter days*”—is one which usually, if not invariably, has reference to the period and the economy subsequent to “the fulness of time,” and frequently late in even that period. The terms of the prediction (“*David their king*” being a prophetic designation of the Messiah,) evidently describe *conversion only*:—this being the clear import of “returning, and seeking the Lord their God, and fearing the Lord and his goodness.”

The *New Testament* passage that predicts simply their conversion, and their reinstatement in the privileges and blessings of the Church of God under its New Testament form, is one familiar to you all,—in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans from the twenty-second to the thirty-first verses.

The only remark I think it necessary to make on this passage is (there being no possible doubt about its reference to a period future in Paul's day, and still future in ours) that as, in the figure used by the Apostle, the *Tree* from which the Jewish branches were broken off is the same with that into which the Gentile branches were grafted in their stead, and the same too into which the Jewish branches, so long broken off, are hereafter to be grafted again,—the Church of God, represented by the tree, though subsisting under different dispensations, and in different stages of its advancement, has been, and is, essentially the same: and that what is here predicted respecting the Jews is—not their national restoration to their city and their land, but their restoration, on their being converted, to the Church of God under the Christian economy; and consequently to the fulness of the privileges and blessings pertaining to it under that economy. How far the Apostle's saying nothing as to the other point—their national restoration—ought to be re-

garded as weighing in evidence against it, is a question which may possibly claim a little notice again.*

Let us now look at a few passages which *seem* at least to predict at once their *conversion* and their *restoration* as a separate people, to the land and city of their fathers. We take first the following:—"And I will bring the land into desolation; and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you; and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them, and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. The land also shall be left of them, and shall enjoy her sabbaths, while she lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they despised my judgments, and because their soul abhorred my statutes. And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD." "And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee. And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice, ac-

* For a full exposition of the passage the reader is referred to the Author's Lectures on the Epistle to the Romans.—ED.

cording to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return, and gather thee from all the nations whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee. And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers. And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”* I have only to say, with regard to these, and some other passages of a similar description which might be quoted, that from the terms employed by Moses, they appear evidently to refer to a dispersion much more general and widely extended—“among all nations,” and “to the utmost parts of heaven,”—than the captivity in Babylon, or in the “cities of the Medes.” And it will not be denied that the terms for their return from this dispersion and their re-settlement in their own land, have as little appearance of being figurative, and to be understood spiritually, as those have which predict the dispersion itself. The ground on which, while the one is interpreted literally and historically, the other is to be understood figuratively and spiritually,—is to come under notice hereafter. We now just observe, that the passages describe at once *conversion* and *restoration*. The terms which describe their *repentance* and *return to God*—in other words their *conversion*—are to be interpreted literally, as directly expressing what they evidently mean; and, consequently, that if those parts of the predictions which speak of their national restoration to Judea and Jerusalem are to be taken figuratively and spiritually, it will follow, that we have only *the same thing twice over*; namely, their conver-

* Lev. xxvi. 32, 33, 40—45; with Deut. xxx. 1—6.

sion expressed *in plain and literal terms*, and their conversion expressed *in figure*. Is this natural? Is this likely? On one principle alone can it well be deemed so; namely, that, while their repentance and turning to God express their conversion—their return to Palestine, and their settlement and prosperity there, are to be taken as figures, not for their conversion, but for their introduction, as the result of their conversion, to all the spiritual privileges and blessings of the New Testament Church, by their simple incorporation, as fellow-christians, in their several places of dispersion, with the believing Gentiles. This position will also come under review, when we notice the objections and reasonings urged against their national restoration. Suffice it for the present to say, that I think it *not tenable*.

Let me next direct you to the language of Ezekiel:—"For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. Thus saith the Lord God, In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded."* Observe as to this passage, how emphatically the two things—the spiritual and the temporal,—their conversion and their national restoration, are distinguished. Mark it especially in the thirty-third verse—"In the day that I have cleansed you from your iniquities, I will *also* cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded." And that this passage too can hardly be con-

* Ezek. xxxvi. 24—28, and 33.

sidered as having had its fulfilment in the return from Babylon, appears from two things:—that the gathering is to be “from all nations;” and that, in the preceding part of the chapter, the restoration to their own land is described as *permanent*; the mountains of Judea never any more to be bereaved of men: which was not true as to the return from Babylon; seeing after but a few centuries a dispersion more complete and much more prolonged, awaited them. And a *third* consideration may be added, that it could hardly be said with truth of the period succeeding the captivity in Babylon, that then Jehovah “*did better unto them than at their beginning.*”*

Look at another passage in the same prophet:—“And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them

for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.”* That this passage, though it might have a partial fulfilment in the restoration from Babylon, has a reference to a more remarkable restoration yet future, appears very strikingly from the terms of the twenty-fifth verse—“And they shall dwell in the land which I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, they, and their children, and their children’s children, for ever:”—and the same idea is repeated in the verses which follow. Was this fulfilled at the return from Babylon? They were then resettled in their land. But have they, and their children, and their children’s children, held it in possession for ever? I need not answer the question. Their condition for the past eighteen centuries is the best answer to it. The time, then, must still be to come.

Then look at the language of Amos:—“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”† On this passage observe, *first*: The preceding verses are in the New Testament expressly applied to Messianic times:—“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue

* Ezek. xxxvii. 21—23.

† Amos ix. 14, 15.

of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.”* This is sufficient proof, that the next verses do not go back from the times of Messiah to the Babylonish captivity, but must relate to a period still future.—Then, *secondly*: This is fully confirmed by what is said in the fifteenth verse—“they shall no more be pulled out of their land.” They *have* been again pulled up, more thoroughly and for more than six and twenty times the duration. Here too, therefore, the restoration must be future. Are its apparently plain terms to be also spiritualized?

Then we have the language of Zechariah in the fourteenth chapter—in harmony with that of the twelfth on which we have already offered our comment:—“All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin’s gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king’s winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.”† From the fact that the prophet lived *after* the return from Babylon, there can be no doubt of this passage having a *future* reference. “While,” says the critic and expositor, to whom I have so often referred, “every barrier to the free intercourse of Christians throughout the world shall be removed, special honour will be conceded to Jerusalem, as the metropolis of converted Israel.” Such is the general idea attached by him to the two verses read.

Passages might be multiplied; but it is needless. The reasoning which applies to one will equally apply to all. But farther discussion must be reserved to a future occasion. I only add now, in conclusion—Seek, all of you, to be united with the spiritual Israel—the “Israel of God,”—the “chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the purchased and peculiar people, and to show forth the virtues”—the divine excellencies—“of him who hath called you out

* Acts xv. 13—17.

† Chap. xiv. 10, 11.

of darkness into his marvellous light." O that I could with confidence say to *all* now hearing me, what Paul says to the Galatians—(if there be any to whom it cannot at this moment be said with truth, let them bethink themselves, and in earnest lay hold on Christ, that of *them* the words may be true, as well as of others:)—“*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.* For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

* Gal. iii. 26—29.

LECTURE XVIII.

ZECH. XII. 10—14.

(SECOND DISCOURSE.)

OUR last Lecture was chiefly occupied in bringing before you, from both the Old Testament and the New, a variety of prophetic passages on the subject of the Jewish restoration, with remarks designed principally to show that they could not relate to the return from Babylon, but must have reference to a time still future. We avoided the citation of any that could even be regarded as, in this respect, doubtful.

The grand objection to the literal interpretation of such passages as foretell the restoration of God's ancient people to their own land, lies in the supposed incongruity of such interpretation with the *genius* of the New Testament dispensation; together with the intermixture of modes of expression which *cannot* be understood literally, but imperatively demand a figurative, typical, spiritual explanation. In the observations which I have now to offer, I shall not attempt to keep these two points entirely distinct. As they necessarily run into each other, such attempt would inevitably occasion repetition such as it is desirable to avoid. Allow me to observe, then—

1. The general position taken in the objection being, that the language of the predictions should be understood *figuratively*—as representing, under allusions to Jewish privileges and blessings, the *conversion* of Israel, to the possession, *with* and *among* the Gentiles (in a state, that is, of

entire incorporation with them, so as to be, nationally and distinctively, *lost*) of the privileges and blessings of the church of God in its advanced, or New Covenant state;—the passages chiefly adduced in support of this position, and from which the difficulty of its opposite is conceived principally to arise, are those in which the return of Israel and Judah to their own land is, indeed, predicted, but in which, at the same time, circumstances are introduced, of which the *literal* interpretation is altogether inadmissible: and, this being the case, the question naturally arises, whether, if one part *must* be taken *figuratively*, the rest should not be taken figuratively too; whether consistency does not demand this. The best way of conveying a correct conception of what I mean, is to take a specimen. I select it from a passage formerly quoted, “Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions: but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them: so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children’s children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.”* In this passage, the particular which *must* be understood *figuratively*, or *typically*, is the affirmation, “*David my servant shall be*

* Ezek. xxxvii. 21,—25.

king over them”—“*My servant David shall be their prince for ever.*” The argument is—If “*David*” here (as is admitted) is put typically for *the Messiah*, is not this of itself a sufficient reason why the other parts of the prophetic description should also be interpreted figuratively and typically?—And other passages are cited in support of this, which sound as literally, while yet they must be understood figuratively: as that for example in the Gospel by Luke—“He” (Jesus) “shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.”* In such expressions, it is argued, the New Testament gives us *a key* to the interpretation of the prophecies of the Old; and as these words do not mean that Jesus was to occupy literally the throne of David on earth, and to reign over the ancient chosen people alone, but was, in heaven, to sway a sceptre of more extensive dominion over a spiritual people,—the true “Israel of God;” so the predicted restoration of Israel should be understood as denoting simply their conversion, and their becoming, in union and incorporation with the Gentiles, spiritual subjects of that spiritual kingdom. On this, then, we remark—

First:—It is at once admitted that “God’s servant David” is here to be understood as a typical designation of the Messiah. Does it follow from this typical designation being used, that all the rest of the passage must be interpreted typically too? If it does, then let it be recollected what is the proper antitype of *Canaan*—the promised land. It is *heaven*. There is “the better country;” there the “everlasting inheritance;”—there “the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,”—“the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” Is all that is said in prophecy, then, about the restoration of the ancient people of God to *their own land* to be understood of their being gathered, as believing converts, into *heaven*?—and all the pro-

* Luke i. 32, 33.

mises of earthly prosperity in that land to be interpreted as figures for the spiritual blessings and joys of that eternal world? I am not aware of any who hold such a position. And yet, if the principle of typical and figurative interpretation is to be adopted, we seem to be shut up to it. If any shall say, Well; and why may it *not* be so?—instead of replying to the question by going over the various modes of speech employed respecting the possession of the land, and the blessings to be enjoyed in it, and arguing how unnatural a strain is required to spiritualize them all, I confine myself to the simple inquiry, What, in that case, are we to make of the promise of their inheriting the land to which they are to be restored—"they, and their children, and their children's children?" Are there to be successive generations in heaven? There is no interpreting this of any other Canaan than the earthly; or, as it is frequently styled, "the land in which their fathers dwelt." Then—

Secondly:—If the typical principle is adopted, *the people*, as well as the land, must be so understood. And for this, indeed, the abettors of the spiritual interpretation do, some of them at least, contend. The ancient people of Israel were a type of the spiritual Israel of all nations under the New Covenant dispensation. According to the said principle, therefore, all that occurs in prophecy respecting what is to befall *Israel and Judah* in "the latter days," must be understood of *the whole converted world*; inasmuch as *Israel and Judah*, considered as the ancient Church and chosen people of God, are the legitimate type of the "chosen generation, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people," collected by God's grace out of all "kindreds and peoples and tongues." But how can this be? In not a few of the prophetic passages, they are mentioned *distinctly from the Gentile nations*; and all that is said about them is said about them *as distinct*; not as incorporated with them, and, in their converted state, becoming an integral part of them, unknown any longer in their separate nationality,—but as "gathered from amongst them," and that for special ends

in reference to *themselves*. These things, it is evident, will not hold together. And still further—

Thirdly:—I formerly observed, that there were predictions, not a few, in which the *conversion* of Israel is, *plainly and literally* foretold, while, at the same time, there is foretold *also* their restoration to their own city and their own land; and that, if the latter part of the predictions is to be interpreted as figurative, the same passages will be found to contain *the same things* predicted in the *letter* and in the *figure*; while yet the two appear, in expression, as distinct:—and that such a supposition was most unnatural, and critically inadmissible. I observed, moreover, that I made no account of the Jewish objection, that we Gentiles interpreted all the *threatenings* against their nation *literally*, and all the *promises* of good to them *spiritually*; inasmuch as, if they felt and estimated as they ought to do, they would at once be sensible that such interpretation was, on both sides of it, really the most favourable to their interests. I now, however, have to add to these observations, that there seems to be a great inconsistency, in interpreting all the prophecies that relate to their restoration in a *spiritual* sense, while all those which relate to their slaughter, and dispersion, and degradation, and sufferings, are understood in a *literal* sense. Surely, if the one are to be interpreted *spiritually*, so ought the other. The predictions of scattering, and bondage, and wrongs, ought, in all fairness, to be interpreted as meaning, not what facts have proved them to mean, but, by figure, their *spiritual condition*, under all its varieties of aspect. No one—not the most determined spiritualist in interpreting the prophecies of their restoration,—ever thinks of such a thing. I do not see, in this case, what warrant there is, or can be, after taking literally all that is said of their *dispersion*, to change at once from the literal to the spiritual; and, in the same predictions, although there is not the remotest indication of any such change, to explain *spiritually* and *figuratively* all that is said of their *restoration*.

It may be alleged, that the change *is* fair; inasmuch as it is required by the change of dispensations, the literal

interpretation of their re-settlement in their own land, and their distinct national subsistence, as Jews, being out of harmony with the *genius*—that is with the *spiritual character*—of the New Covenant economy. I am thus at once led forward to the more particular notice of this view of the objection. Let then the following observations be considered:—

It is asserted, in the first place, that the continued distinctness of the Jewish nation, and the bestowment on them of any special honour or favour, is inconsistent with the language of Paul when he says:—"Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more;"* and with the sentiment repeatedly stated elsewhere, that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all." The reply to this is plain. The words quoted, and other similar passages, express the *identity* of the Saviour and his salvation, for *mankind*,—for Jew and Gentile alike. There is not one Messiah and Saviour for the Jewish people, and another for the Gentile nations. All stand on the same footing. All distinctions are, in this matter, done away with. The Jews of old, in their selfish narrowness and pride of heart, looked on Jehovah as *their* God; on His word and worship as *their* peculiar privilege; on the coming Messiah as *their* Messiah, and His kingdom and reign as exclusively over *them*, and all the honours and blessings of that kingdom and reign as destined for *them* alone. They had all this to unlearn. God's choice of them as His peculiar people, and His covenant of peculiarity with them, had an ulterior bearing upon mankind at large. The special was introductory to the universal. The Messiah of the Jews was to be "the Saviour of the world." All distinctions were, in the matter of acceptance with God, the enjoyment of His favour, and the hope of life, to be done away; and Jew and Gentile placed on the same

* 2 Cor. v. 16.

footing. This was a lesson which even the Apostles and Jewish Christians were slow to learn. It was one of the last they were brought fully to receive. They had "known *men* after the flesh,"—vaunting of their own descent from the fathers, and especially from Abraham "the friend of God." They had "known Christ after the flesh,"—boasting of his Jewish lineage, and of his being "a minister of the circumcision." They had known him *as a Jew*, and as a *Jewish deliverer*. They were *now* to know him as, although a Jew, a deliverer for men of "every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation." But what we have now to do with is this, that Christ's being thus "the Saviour of the world,"—the Saviour of *men*, without distinction of nations,—not only did not do away, but did not, in the least degree, interfere with, *national distinctions*. It was no more necessary to it, or implied in it, that the Jews should *cease to be a nation*, than it was that any other people should: no more necessary that the Jews should be merged and lost in the Gentiles, than that the Gentiles should be merged and lost in the Jews. The cessation of all distinction in the matter of salvation, did not in the remotest degree render it necessary that the Jews should cease to be a distinct people. They might still remain a people, and stand, in this matter, on the same footing with every other people; just as every other people stood on the same footing with them and with all the rest of the nations. When we say, with regard to the ground of salvation, and the enjoyment of New Testament privileges, and blessings, and hopes,—“There is neither Scotch nor English; there is neither French nor German, nor British nor American,” we say nothing that in the smallest degree affects the continued existence of these national distinctions. So, when we say, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile,” we say nothing that implies at all that *Jew* is to be annihilated, and Gentile alone remain. And when “the vail shall be taken from the hearts” of the off-cast and out-cast people, and they shall see the glories of the “despised and rejected” “Nazarene,”—they too, like Paul and the early believers, will “know no man after the flesh;” they

will give up their vainglorious dependencies and boastings, and call the converted world their brethren: but this does not at all require their ceasing to be a distinct people. Their bearing the one designation of *Christians* is quite compatible with their remaining a nation. If they are a Christianized nation, they will sustain the same common relation to other nations that other Christianized nations will sustain to them and to one another. Greek and Jew will continue; and yet, in the sense of the Apostle, there will be "neither Greek nor Jew." Surely, when "the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ," the terms are not to be understood as meaning that they are no longer to be "kingdoms of this world;" that all national distinctions are to terminate. So, neither is there any reason whatever for supposing that, when the Jews shall come to say, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," *their* national existence shall terminate.

Again, when the *genius* of the Christian dispensation is spoken of by those who differ from us on this question, they are apt to fall into what I may call the *extravagance*—the *enthusiasm*—of *spiritualizing*. They seem to imagine that it must not only, in its characteristic features, be a spiritual dispensation; but that there must be nothing in it, or connected with it, *but* what is spiritual,—nothing whatever that is temporal. But this is just as great a mistake on the one side, as theirs is on the other, who, because the ancient dispensation was one (as from its typical nature it could not fail to be) characteristically external and worldly, conceived of it, and spoke of it, and wrote of it, as if there had been nothing in it that was spiritual. That system of prevailing and unavoidable externality had in it not a little that was spiritual: and the spiritual system of the new covenant has its measure of externality. It has its outward observances, and its initiatory and commemorative ordinances. And if "godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come," can any sound reason be given, why, when they are brought to the faith of the gospel, God's ancient people should not find some of the

promises which are waiting till then for their fulfilment, promises of *temporal good*? No doubt they will find promises of higher and better blessings too to be then verified in their happy experience: but these will not exclude the other, any more than the promise to all believers of "the life that is to come," sets aside and nullifies that of "the life that now is." Both descriptions of promise stand in prophecy to the credit of their account: set to their credit, not on the ground of any desert of theirs, but by grace alone. If both kinds of blessing are specified, why should they not both be taken as they are found? They occur, as we have before seen, *in the same passages*. Had the directly spiritual been found by themselves in some passages, and the directly temporal by themselves in others, there might have been somewhat more ground for understanding the latter figuratively, or as a typical form of the other. But they are almost invariably blended together; and we see not why each should not be taken in its own proper sense.

We go a step further. It is often affirmed that it is quite inconsistent with the genius of the Gospel, by which all are placed on a level, that there should be any specially elevating and honourable distinction and favour conferred on one people more than on another: and it is conceived that the divine interference for the national restoration of Israel will be such a distinction and favour,—placing them above the Gentiles. Now I do not like this. It savours, in appearance at least, of jealousy; of Christian jealousy, in return for Jewish. It seems as if a portion of the spirit of the Jew had got possession of the Gentile; claiming that the Jew having had his turn of honour and distinction of old, the Gentile should have it now; and that it should be shown in the swallowing-up and annihilation of the Jew. If there is to be no special honour elevating any one people above another, is there I would ask, to be the reverse—any special dishonour, degrading any one people beneath the rest? (which would surely be the case, were any one people to be absorbed and lost in the rest:) and is it likely that that people, destined to have their name and memory for-

gotten, should be the very people whom of old God “delighted to honour,” and who are still divinely declared to be “beloved for the fathers’ sakes?” Nay more: we affirm that the argument confutes itself. Were the Jews to be thus swallowed up,—absorbed, incorporated, and as a people, lost; it is true, indeed, that there would be *no distinction*: but, mark it,—there would, at the same time, be *no manifestation of the cessation of distinction*. To such manifestation, the continued existence of the people is indispensable. They will then appear, occupying the same position before God with other nations; not, as of old, a people peculiar in their privileges, and their worship, and their commemorative observances,—of a different religion as well as locality, from the rest; but Christianized,—worshipping the same God, in the name of the same Mediator, even him whom their fathers crucified; acknowledging the same inspired oracles; drawing their water from the same “wells of salvation;” living on the same “bread of life;” owning and adoring the same Father; building their hopes on the same ground; and anticipating, with all the rest of Abraham’s spiritual seed, the same final inheritance. Without the Jewish people thus remaining distinct, *all would be Gentiles*: the name of Jew would cease; and while all would, no doubt, be the same, there would be no *holding forth of the sameness*. It could not be said “There is neither Greek nor Jew:” for there would be Greek, but no Jew.

It has been asked—What has become of those “thousands of Jews” that were converted to Christianity in “the beginning of the Gospel?” Have not *they* been incorporated with the Gentiles, and lost as Jews? And the inference drawn from this is—if it has been thus with them, why should we expect it to be otherwise with the rest, when *they* come to be converted also? My simple answer is—We know, first of all, very little about what became of the early Jewish converts, whether they were really incorporated and lost, or not. Our knowledge is too limited and precarious, to admit of our making it the basis of any sure conclusion. Then, further, even supposing these thousands *had* been incorporated, they

were not *the nation*. They were but a small fraction of it. The mass of the nation remained in unbelief, and came under the judicial infliction of the curses which, so many centuries before, Moses had, under divine inspiration, denounced against them. And, at the same time, agreeably to the same early intimations, they have not been lost, but kept in reserve, that, when they have given full exemplification of the faithfulness of divine threatenings, they may furnish an equally striking exemplification of the faithfulness of divine promises. What *can* be the design of God in what (notwithstanding the lightness with which some have treated it in the present argument) I must still call the wonderful preservation of this people in separation from all the nations among which they have, for eighteen hundred years, been scattered? I have not now time to point out the considerations and the facts which serve to show the remarkableness of their preservation in this state of distinctness; or to compare their history, in this respect, with that of other tribes and nations. I may only observe, that, had it not been regarded by God himself as an extraordinary thing, we can hardly imagine that it would have been so specially insisted on in the prophecies concerning them. Had it been nothing out of the ordinary course of events in the destinies of other nations, why should it have been so emphatically and repeatedly predicted? Mark the language used:—"And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God:"* Again:—"For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished:"† and to these many others might be added. *Why*, then, are they thus kept separate? Why, when so many other tribes have, in much shorter periods, been lost, beyond all distinction, among the

* Lev. xxvi. 44.

† Jer. xxx. 11.

nations by whom they have been overcome, has this nation, "scattered and peeled" in so extraordinary a degree, still maintained, and maintained everywhere, its distinct existence. Even scattered drops have still kept by themselves, and never found their way into the rivers and the ocean. Is not this to be interpreted as a sign of God's purpose, not only to turn them individually to Himself, but to preserve them also nationally, and to fulfil to them the temporal as well as the spiritual promises?

Let it not be asked, What good end is to be answered by their restoration to their own land, and their settlement there? That is not the question. The simple question ought to be—*Is it in this Book?* If so, we may rest assured that *some* good end is to be served by it, even although *we* may not be able to discover it. But surely there is *one* end that we can see. What is the great end of all prophecy? Is it not that, when it comes to be fulfilled, the miracle of knowledge (for such every prophecy is) may be discerned, and may produce conviction? Who, then, can tell, to what extent the conversion of the Gentile world may be hastened on by the intervention of God's providence for the fulfilment of His word? Is *this* not an object, were there no other, worthy of Him who "knoweth the end from the beginning?"

As to all questions suggested by real or supposed difficulties, and what to the eyes of men may even seem impossibilities, I have but one answer:—*we* are not judges. *How* is this to be done? and, *How can* this ever be done? are not questions for us. The only question is—*Has God revealed it?* If He has, we may surely leave it to Him to find the means of fulfilling His own word. It is God's prerogative, in the majesty of omniscience and omnipotence, to say—"My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." All questionings of unbelief and doubt become presumptuously impious, when we have ascertained, respecting anything, that GOD HAS SAID IT. If it would be presumptuous to *ask* such questions, it would savour of the same presumption to set about attempts to solve them; to point out methods by which the Infinite may work out His designs.

There is only one other question on which I feel it necessary to say a word or two,—Is their conversion *prior* to their restoration, or their restoration to their conversion? There seems little ground for hesitation here. In almost all the passages which foretell their restoration, it is foretold as preceded by their repentance and turning to God. They are described as “accepting the punishment of their iniquity;” acknowledging God’s righteousness in their punishment; humbling themselves before Him; supplicating His forgiveness; casting themselves on His mercy. This, especially in the circumstances in which they now stand, I cannot but regard as equivalent to their *conversion*. I should, in *any* circumstances, hesitate to admit the distinction made by Mr. Frey, the converted Jew, in his work published some years ago, entitled “Joseph and Benjamin,” between *repentance* and *conversion*, when, in answering the question *Which first*—their conversion or their restoration? he avows, with all confidence, his conviction to be in favour of their *restoration* having precedence of their *conversion*. But *not*, he says, of their *repentance*. Their repentance, according to him, will be *before* their return to Jerusalem and Palestine, and their conversion *after* it. I greatly hesitate in the present case; and for this reason:—Whatever was the sin for which in a special manner they have had their sufferings laid upon them, their *repentance*, as preceding, and being essential to, their restoration, must of necessity have special reference to that particular sin. What, then, *was* that sin? Beyond all doubt, the rejection and crucifixion of “the Lord of glory.” When they “repent,” therefore, it must, in the very first place, be *for that sin*. But repentance for that sin necessarily implies *faith in him*:—and faith in him *is conversion*. The sentiment that their restoration to their land, and re-settlement in their city are to take precedence of their conversion, is founded in part, I might say *chiefly*, on the terms of the passage now before us. The promised outpouring of the Spirit, and the mourning to which it gives rise, are evidently here introduced as subsequent to their re-settlement in Jerusalem. And, were it not

for the plain intimations of their repentance and conversion preceding their return, and the accordance of such intimations with the facts of their former history, this might have decided the point. But, these passages evidently settling it otherwise, we are induced, for the sake of harmonizing them and the one before us, to regard the outpouring of the Spirit spoken of in the latter as having reference, not to the divine influence by which their repentance and conversion are to be effected, but to a subsequent copious effusion of the Spirit upon them, after their having been converted and restored,—producing this social mourning for the sins which had so long banished them from their country, their city, and their temple; and the united confession of those sins to God, and humble supplication for their forgiveness, and for the continuance of Jehovah's unmerited mercy.

I close, for the present, by calling upon you afresh, as the fit improvement of what has now been said, to lay to heart and reduce to practice the all-important admonition of Jesus, "*Have faith in God*,"—faith in the truth of all His testimonies; faith in the faithfulness of His promises and threatenings, and the absolutely sure verification of both; faith in the wisdom and the might of His universal and unintermitting providence, controlling all events, and directing them infallibly to His own purposed results; faith in His revealed and covenanted mercy, through the mediation of Him who is the Saviour—the divine and only Saviour of Gentile and of Jew, without an interest in whom there is nothing for either but perdition; and faith in the happy influence of all His precepts, when obeyed in fear and love.

LECTURE XIX.

ZECH. XII. 10—14.

(THIRD DISCOURSE.)

THE preceding part of the chapter, we formerly saw, contains a prediction of the future resettlement of the Jewish people in Jerusalem and in Palestine. We have since endeavoured to lay before you the evidence that this prediction ought to be understood, not as a mere figure for their conversion and spiritual restoration, but in the natural and literal meaning of the terms;—the prophecies of their conversion, couched also in plain and appropriate terms, being found accompanying those of their national recovery. We have considered too the evidence that their *conversion* is to *precede* their *restoration*. In the close of last Lecture it was noticed, that by not a few the passage before us is understood of their *conversion*; and that, if this view were correct, it would decide the question differently,—proving the *posteriority* of the spiritual to the temporal change; inasmuch as the outpouring of the Spirit foretold here is *subsequent* to their settlement in Jerusalem. The proof, however, is irresistible, of their faith, and repentance, having the precedence; of their being simultaneously visited, in their dispersions, with a sense of their sin, and the sin of their fathers, in “rejecting and despising” the true Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth,—and their consequent “turning to God from whom they had revolted.” And then follows their being brought back nationally to their own land, and settled there anew. We shall

see immediately that the passage before us is in perfect concord with this view; not at all a proof against it.

Meanwhile, let me repeat the remark, that with questions as to *how* this national restoration is to be effected, we have, properly, nothing to do. It ought never to be considered necessary to our faith in any prediction of God's word, that we find it difficult at times to answer such questions, and to point out *in what way* God is to accomplish His purposes. There is, however, a passage in Isaiah, which, on mature reflection, I am more than disposed to regard as bearing upon this point:—"Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the LORD, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou has lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."* The words are addressed to ZION:—"But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her suck-

ing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers and they that made thee waste shall go forth of thee.”* There are two principles on which the language may be interpreted. It may refer to the gathering, from all parts of the world, of converts among the Gentiles to the true Church of God, to supply the places of the unbelieving Jews, when they should be cut off and cast out for their rejection of the Messiah. The Church—the spiritual Zion—is, on *this* principle, represented as feeling, and bewailing the desolation arising from this rejection of the large mass of those who had, by profession, appeared among her children; and as comforted and cheered by the repair of the desolation,—the filling up of their rooms by an accession of children from among the Gentiles. In this sense I have been accustomed to understand the passage. I now understand it differently. It refers, I think, to the restoration of God’s ancient people, and to the agency which should be employed by Him in effecting it. The gathering is the gathering, not of Gentile converts, but of the scattered “outcasts of Israel,” “from the four corners of the earth;” and, since the entire chapter has reference to Gospel times, it seems reasonable, and even necessary, to understand it as relating not to the return from Babylon, but to a return still future. And to the questions of Zion’s perplexity and wonder—“Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?”—the answer of Jehovah is—pointing to the instrumentality, or agency, by which the restoration of these outcasts was to be effected:—“Behold, I will lift up mine hand” (as an authoritative and imperative signal, insuring obedience,) “I will lift up

* Isa. xlix. 15—17.

mine hand *to the Gentiles*:" "and," it is added in military phrase, "I will set up my standard to the people;" as that around which their hosts were, for a special service, to muster: "and they shall"—it is not said *come themselves*, but—"they shall *bring thy sons* in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders:" alluding to the eastern modes of bearing about children. And then the princes and rulers of the nations are represented as devoting themselves to the interests of the scattered people of God, and, with a submissive reverence for the people whom Jehovah returns to honour, placing the resources of their kingdoms at their service, for completing their restoration. In what specific *manner* the favour of the Gentile nations and their princes shall be manifested, or put into practical operation, in bringing about the gathering to Jerusalem and to Judea of the dispersed of Israel, *Time* must reveal. That they are to be exposed to opposition,—to warlike attacks and sieges, and attempts to dispossess and destroy them, and that these shall issue in the discomfiture of those by whom they are made, are the prophetic intimations of the former verses of the chapter. In the verses now under review, they appear, victoriously and peacefully, *settled in Jerusalem*. It is *THEN*,—when they have leisure, after the toils and terrors of war, to look back on the past and reflect on the present, that the scene of sorrow, humiliation, and prayer, is represented as taking place.

The whole passage seems descriptive of a social act of penitential confession of past transgressions; of submissive acknowledgment of divine rectitude in all that they and their fathers had been doomed to endure; and of supplication for the continuance of the divine favour, "not for their righteousnesses, but for God's great mercies." The scene depicted bears a very close resemblance to those recorded to have taken place on the restoration from Babylon; when Jehovah, having influenced them individually to return to Himself, and to set their faces, with longing desire, to "the land of their fathers," inclined their hearts when thus gathered home, to social and collective acts of humiliation

and prayer. The prayers of EZRA and of NEHEMIAH on those occasions, might be taken as models, in the spirit and even the matter of them, for the "supplications" of Judah and Israel, when brought back from their wider and more lasting dispersions.* The promise, in the passage before us, accordingly, is not to the people of Israel and Judah *in their state of dispersion*. All the promises that relate to their repentance and their returning to God by faith and obedience, are made to them, *as in a state of dispersion*; and as necessary and preparatory to their being brought back to their own land. But the promise *here* is not so. It is a promise to them, as already brought back, and occupying the city of their fathers. It is to the "*house of David*," and to "*the inhabitants of Jerusalem*." They have been visited of God in their dispersion, in all their diverse and distant localities. They have again, to their grateful amazement, been re-united. They have compared their feelings. They have found that they have been the same, "as in water the face answereth to the face." And, finding this,—"*with one heart and one voice*" they celebrate together the long-suffering patience, and the tender mercy, of the God of salvation; bowing to His faithfulness in His threatenings, and rejoicing in the equal faithfulness of His promises. They are again *a people*; no longer "scattered and peeled,"—driven from the land, and city, and sepulchres of their fathers,—a few here and a few there "*among all the nations of the earth*,"—but again drawn together by the elective attraction of kindred and country, and under the smile and blessing of their covenant God; who no longer neutralizes that instinctive force, and hinders its uniting power, in judicial displeasure, but "*turning their captivity as the streams in the south*," settles them anew in their families, if not entirely according to their tribal distinctions, (the advent of the Messiah having rendered the preservation of their genealogies no longer necessary,) yet "*as one people on the mountains of Israel*,"—one flock, in

* Ezra ix. and Nehemiah iv.

one fold, under one Shepherd; and that divine Shepherd now common to them, with the converted world; "One Lord, and his name one!"

Let us now see if we can briefly gather up the particulars, which appear to call for special notice in the passage.

1. The first that demands attention is *the speaker*. That speaker is JEHOVAH. He is the same throughout the chapter. It is He who, in the language of the first verse, "stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him." And He is introduced in every preceding verse. There is no change of speaker. And yet mark—

2. What he says of himself:—"And they shall look on ME *whom they pierced*." As might be expected, attempts have been made to invalidate the correctness of the text from which this translation is taken. And it is not to be denied, that more than one among orthodox critics have adopted HIM instead of ME. There does not appear, however, to be any thing like sufficient evidence to warrant an alteration. The speaker is that divine "Angel of the covenant," who has come so repeatedly before our view in the preceding prophecies: the same too whom we shall find Jehovah addressing as *His equal* in the following chapter—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts." Why should we hesitate to admit the translation? Is this the *only* passage in the prophets, in which the different attributes of the *Infinite* and the *finite*,—of *Deity* and *humanity*, are combined? Do not we find, in Isaiah, him who says—"I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering," immediately adding—"I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting?" Is not "the child born, the son given," "the mighty God?" Is not the child of the virgin "Immanuel?" And who can this be, but he who, while living on earth "a man of sorrows," could say—"I and my Father are one?" The

speaker, then, is Jehovah-Jesus:* and the view thus presented of His two natures in one person, is in harmony with the entire tenor, as well as with numberless explicit statements, of the word of God. Observe—

3. The singularity of this prediction, as involving *two*. What is immediately foretold is the repentance and mourning of the Jewish people, on their “looking on him whom they had pierced:” but the fact implied is his *having been pierced*. And this, therefore, is a prediction also. There are, in truth, *two* predictions; the one that *Messiah should be pierced*; the other, that the penitent Jews should *look on him who had been pierced*. The predictions relate of course to widely distant periods. Since the first was fulfilled, eighteen centuries have passed away. But it *was* fulfilled: and the fulfilment of it gives us ground of assurance that the other also shall be fulfilled in its time. We have the fulfilment of the first thus recorded:—“But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water.”† And mark (for in the evidence of divine revelation from the fulfilment of prophecy the observation is important) *the agency* by which the fulfilment was, in this case, effected. Had any one who knew the predic-

* “The expression ‘upon me’ is very remarkable. According to verse first the speaker is the Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth. But it is evident from what follows, that we are not to confine our thoughts exclusively to an invisible God, who is beyond the reach of suffering, for the same Jehovah presently represents himself as pierced by the Israelites, and afterwards lamented by them with bitter remorse. The enigma is solved by the Old Testament doctrine of the Angel and revealer of the Most High God, to whom the Prophet attributes even the most exalted names of God on account of his participation in the divine nature.” *Hengstenberg’s Christol. in loc.* If the reader would know by what varied and strange modes the unbelieving Jews have endeavoured to get rid of this passage as applying to the Messiah he may consult the work just quoted; or Dr. M’Caul’s *Translation of Rabbi David Kimchi’s Commentary on the Prophecies of Zechariah*. A favourite mode is to understand the term *pierce* figuratively as meaning to *grieve*.—Ed.

† John xix. 33, 34.

tion thrust the spear into the side of Jesus,—it might have been alleged, however groundlessly, that it had been purposely done to make the fact accord with it. But all ignorant, and all unconscious, was this Roman soldier, that he was doing a thing that bore any relation either to the past or the future,—far less, that he was the agent of God (to him an “unknown God”) in verifying His word. And the same is the case with regard to another predicted piercing:—“They pierced my hands and my feet.”* This too was done by the unconscious instrumentality of Roman soldiers. And, implying, as it did, that *crucifixion* was to be the death he should suffer,—the way in which *that* was brought about was no less extraordinary. “Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee. Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death: that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.”† One would have thought, the Jews would have caught eagerly at the permission thus accorded them to follow *their own law*, impatient as they were of subjection to the jurisdiction of Rome. Little did they think, when they were thus declining the permission, and urging against it this very subjection—“*It is not lawful* for us to put any man to death:” that they were providing an additional proof of *his* Messiahship whom they were disowning and murdering. For, *had* they followed the prescriptions of *their own law*, Jesus, as a blasphemer (according to their false allegation and sentence) must have been *stoned*: and so *this* prediction as well as others of his own, would have been falsified! Of the minuteness, and apparently accidental character of the facts, and the ignorance and unconsciousness of the agency by which they are brought about, various and striking are the exemplifications in Scripture prophecy,

* Psa. xxii. 16.

† John xviii. 29—32.

connected with Scripture history. Let this confirm our faith in the truth of God's testimonies, and in the sure accomplishment of all His predictions. Notice now—

4. The *gracious promise*:—"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of supplications." The promise, you will observe, relates to all classes, from the highest to the lowest:—"the house of David" meaning the Royal House; and "the inhabitants of Israel" the people at large, individually and by their families. And, this being the large extent of the promise,—what is the promise itself? I answer, "*The Spirit of grace and of supplications*" does not mean the *disposition* merely of reliance on grace and of prayer; but the *divine agent* by whom the disposition is inspired—"the *Holy Spirit*" in all his blessed influences. We are carried back, in our reflections, to the day of Pentecost, when so extraordinary an effusion of the same Spirit was vouchsafed:—and then, too, in fulfilment of prophetic promise. But between the two cases there is a difference. In *this* case, there is no impartation of miraculous powers and gifts,—no "prophesying," no "seeing of visions," no "dreaming of dreams," no "speaking with tongues." On Pentecost, there was a union of the miraculous and the gracious:—here, there is the gracious alone. The Spirit is called "the Spirit of *grace*," as being the gift of God's free favour; as bearing testimony to grace alone in the sinner's salvation; and as the author of all gracious dispositions and affections in the human soul; bringing it into harmonious concord with God's methods of grace revealed by the Gospel, and making grace to tell effectually on all the active powers; teaching its subjects to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." And He is called "*the Spirit of supplications*," because, coming *from* God, He draws immediately *to* God. His very first influence and manifestation is—"Behold he prayeth!" He teaches all under His agency, not merely in the way of convincing them of the *duty*, but in the way of inclining their hearts to avail themselves of the privilege,—"*in every*

thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, to make their requests known unto God." Wherever the divine Spirit dwells, communion with God will be the characteristic feature of the favoured individual in whom He abides. He will make intercession *in* him and *for* him, "with groanings which cannot be uttered." And, when His influences come largely down on families, on churches, on communities, the result will be *a concert of prayer*;—a union of hearts, and a united out-pouring of the desires of those hearts, at the footstool of God. The "one Spirit" produces a common feeling of dependence, and of earnest longing after the same blessings; application for them on the same ground; and then a grateful sense of obligation for their bestowment, uttering itself in thanksgiving and praise in union with petition.

5. What is the *special state of mind* here represented as the product of this outpouring of the Spirit?—"They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him, as one that mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Here several things call for notice:—

First, the *cause* of the mourning:—"They shall look on *me* whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for *him*." That the same person is meant by the *me* and the *him*, is sufficiently evident. In prophetic language such transitions from the first to the third person are not without examples. The cause of mourning is the very same with that which wakened the penitential grief in the bosoms of the Pentecostal converts. What said "Peter and the other apostles" to them?—That "by wicked hands they had crucified and slain" Him whom God had attested as the Messiah and the Saviour by his resurrection from the dead;—that they had "slain the Prince of life." The conviction of this fearful guilt being brought clearly and strongly home to their consciences, we have the effect in these words:—"They were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* All

* Acts ii. 37.

along from that day to this, the impenitent and unbelieving Jews have been giving their heart's *consent* to the judgment and deed of their fathers. They have reiterated the outcry—"His blood be on us, and on our children!" They have thus continued, through many successive generations, to "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." It is on this account that it is here said, even of the Jews who shall repent and believe in a yet future generation—"They shall look on him whom *they* have pierced." They have made the deed of their fathers their own; have cherished the same malice, and repeated the same anathemas on the Nazarene, and the same imprecations on themselves on His account. The expression—"whom they have pierced" does not here signify, merely that their sins, like "the sins of the whole world," contributed to bring upon the divine Saviour all his sufferings. They signify more. They describe the *state of mind and heart* toward Jesus of Nazareth; their being, though not in act yet in spirit, as really His murderers as their fathers were.

The mourning, then, is penitential mourning. It is mourning *for sin*;—for their multiplied and long-continued thoughts, and words, and acts of disobedience and rebellion, and above all the rest for *this sin*—the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God,—“the Messiah promised to the fathers.” This they will feel to be the SIN OF SINS; the heaviest in all the catalogue of Jewish or human crimes. And this naturally leads me to notice—

Secondly, the *intensity* of the mourning:—"they shall mourn for him *as one mourneth for an only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.*" There are few states of deeper and acuter sorrow than this,—that which is felt by affectionate parents, when bereft of these objects of their fondest affections:—the one solitary object of their concentrated parental love; or the first-born and rising support and hope of their household. Such shall be the intensity of the grief with which they shall be penetrated, for the accumulated guilt of so many

centuries of unbelieving and malignant rejection of Him whom they shall then see—no longer “as a root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness, nor any beauty why they should desire him,” but as “the chief among ten thousand—the altogether lovely;” as Jehovah’s “servant whom he had upheld, his Elect in whom his soul delighted.” And observe—

Thirdly, the *universality* of the mourning, as presented in the closing verses of the chapter:—“In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart: the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; all the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.”

The case referred to in the eleventh verse is that of the mourning for the death of good king *Josiah*; who received the wound of which he died in Hadadrimmon in the great plain, or valley, of Esdraelon, near Megiddo. The lamentation for the death of this devout and devoted prince was the most sincere, deep, and universal that was ever known among the Jews:—“His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers: and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah; and all the singing-men and the singing-women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they are written in the Lamentations.”* So general and heart-felt should be the national lamentation for their sins, and especially for the sin of having put to death a greater than Josiah, or than any earthly monarch—the Messiah, the true “King of the Jews,” and the Saviour of the world. There is first the

* 2 Chron. xxxv. 24, 25.

general statement, "*The land shall mourn:*" the whole land—all its inhabitants, "from Dan to Beersheba:" Then we have all the families of all the different ranks and classes of the inhabitants. Some conceive that when *Nathan* is named it is Nathan one of David's sons, thus mentioned in connexion with his father. And on the same principle they understand *Shimei* to be one of the sons of Levi, classed with his father as Nathan is with David. I am disposed to think rather that the Nathan meant is Nathan *the prophet*; and that Shimei was some *scribe* of distinction and notoriety. We shall thus have four leading classes of the population. "The family of the house of David" includes the whole *royal* lineage. "The family of the house of Levi," the whole of the *priesthood*. "The family of the house of Nathan," all the lineage of the *prophets*: and "the family of the house of Shimei," the whole assemblage of the *scribes*; or, if Shimei be considered as a man of note among the people, the whole body of the inhabitants. The circumstance so specially mentioned—"every family apart, *and their wives apart*"—appears to have reference to the practice of males and females sitting and worshipping separately. And to this too there may be an allusion in the words of Paul—"In Christ Jesus *there is neither male nor female.*" The general idea then, which seems intended to be conveyed, is that this mourning shall be both national, domestic, and personal. *All* shall mourn—publicly and privately; unitedly and severally; in their families and in their closets:—rulers, priests, prophets, scribes, and people.

Let us see now, ere we close, what lessons there are here *for us*. We may learn

1. What the Bible invariably teaches us—that all spiritual and holy affections, emotions, desires, principles of action, and states of mind, are, in human nature, the product of the Divine Spirit's agency. There is nothing in us by nature truly good. If the Scripture character of our fallen nature be correct—"the carnal mind is enmity against God," no mere amendment, or reformation will suffice. There

must be regeneration, conversion, a new creation; the slaying of the enmity, and the implantation of love—supreme love to God.

What a blessed assurance, then, it is—that God “giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.” Let us ask for ourselves; and ask also for our fellow-christians and our fellow-men. If we have the assurance that it will not be withheld when sought for *ourselves*; not less surely ought our confidence to be of obtaining the grant, when, under the impulse of piety and benevolence,—a desire for the divine glory and the best interests of men, we seek the Spirit’s agency to turn a revolted world to God. O let it be the united and fervent intercession of the whole Church, that He would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh!—that the Jews may be speedily and effectually reclaimed from their long-continued and inveterate apostasy; and that the whole world of idolatrous heathenism may, under the same divine operation, consign their idols to the flames or to the floods, and serve the one true God, in the name of the one Mediator between God and man.

2. All without exception may be called to “look to Him *whom they have pierced*.” Unbelieving and disobedient “sinners of the Gentiles” are in the same general position with unbelieving and disobedient sinners of “the house of Israel.” You have not literally “pierced” the dying Saviour: you have not driven the nails, nor thrust the spear, nor woven the thorns. *No more have they*. But you, like them, have pierced him by your sins. These were a part of the deadly poison of his cup. And you, by rejecting Him, whether for a longer or a shorter season of your lives, have, like them, virtually “consented unto his death,” and have thus far been “guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

Have you ever thus looked on Him, and mourned?—ever thus been “in bitterness” for the share your sins had in nailing Him to the tree,—in mingling for Him his cup of woe? Have you ever, in providence, been called to experience the deep sorrow inflicted by the death of those you have loved,—who have been “bone of your bone, and flesh of

your flesh"—a part of your very selves. And have you ever had any sorrow for your sins, and for your ungrateful requital of the grace of the SINNER'S FRIEND, such as at all approaches in intensity and bitterness to *that*? Think. Ask yourselves the question. Press it home. Surely sorrow for sin ought to be the chief of sorrows! When you think what sin is; what sin has done; how it has dishonoured God, and ruined angels and men; what mischief and misery, if unrepented of, and uncanceled from God's Book, it is working to yourselves, for the coming eternity of your being:—O what ought to be your lamentations over it!—your earnestness to be delivered from both its guilt and its power! And there is no way of such deliverance but coming to THE cross; looking there, in faith and penitence, on the dying Saviour; confessing, and mourning, and suing for mercy. God promises—"Behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you; I will make known my words unto you." And when, under divine teaching, you know those "words of eternal life," the darkness will become light; the bitterness be turned to sweetness; the mourning to joy. For—

3. There is *joy* as well as sorrow—*gladness* as well as mourning. The one leads to the other. We cannot arrive at the joy, but through the grief. Till we have seen and felt our sins to be exceeding sinful,—their wages death:—till we have seen their fearfulness in the expiation made for them,—“looking on HIM whom we have pierced,” and remembering *who He was*, and *what He endured*:—till we have, with Gethsemane and Calvary before us, bewailed our sins, implored and found their forgiveness, and sought and obtained grace to forsake them,—we can have no true peace,—no true happiness. But when we have *thus* “looked on Him whom we have pierced, and mourned,”—the night of weeping is succeeded by the morning of joy. God does not mean that all our days should be dark. At the cross, he “takes off our sackcloth, and girds us with gladness.”

LECTURE XX.

ZECH. XIII. 1.

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.”

BECAUSE of the deep interest we ourselves have in its contents, I have taken this verse alone. It is first, however, to be viewed, from the connexion in which it stands, as referring to restored and penitent Israel. And, in so viewing it, we must begin by adverting again to the circumstances, as before described, in which the people appear here before us. They have, in their various and distant dispersions, been visited by the converting grace of the God of their fathers. By the arrangements of His providence, and the instrumental agency provided by Him, they have been brought back to their own land and their own city; and are designated as “the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” After having, by the immediate aid of God, discomfited and scattered their enemies, and settled there in peace, a fresh effusion of the Spirit of God comes down upon them collectively, as it had previously come down upon them in their scattered state. They reflect anew on their sinfulness and guilt. They mingle together, and compare their feelings. The sense of divine justice in their own and their fathers’ sufferings for so many ages, unites with a sense of the divine forbearance in still having preserved them from destruction, and having visited them afresh in mercy, and lifted upon them anew the light of His counte-

nance, and given them again a settlement in the land from which they had been so long exiled. They had partaken of the common punishment. They now share together in the common goodness and grace. Convinced of the folly of all their vain imaginings and infatuated anticipations of a Messiah yet to come; convinced that He whom their fathers crucified was the true Christ and the only Saviour,—their own guilt, and their fathers' guilt appears before them in more and more aggravated, affecting, humbling, heart-breaking aspects. They are filled with renewed fears, when they think of it. They sigh and mourn, and mingle their penitential tears together. "Their souls are cast down within them." It seems to them, as if the sin were beyond the reach of even divine forgiveness. They feel afresh, as their fathers did, when, having the murder of "the Prince of life" pressed upon their consciences, they cried out, in the agony of an awakened and self-convicted spirit—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Their consciences are awakened anew by their mutual communings one with another. They mourn together; and they mourn apart. They feel that they have all had their share in the common guilt. They confess their sins together. Together they plead for mercy. Instead of each trying to alleviate in his neighbour's bosom and in his own the sense of the evil committed, their separate reflections only serve to thrust the barbed and poisoned darts of an accusing conscience the deeper; so that each imparting this result to others, the aggregate of mourning is augmented, and its intensity heightened. The question is—What, in those circumstances, is provided for them? what are they to do? And to such questions our text furnishes the answer:—"In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."

The points which, in the words, demand our notice are—WHAT THEY NEEDED: and HOW THAT NEED IS PROVIDED FOR.

1. WHAT THEY NEEDED. This consists, evidently, in two things, *deliverance from guilt and condemnation*; and *de-*

liverance from sin's impurity. And these are the very blessings for which our text represents provision as made. The fountain is opened "for SIN, and for UNCLEANNESS." The former we here understand as meaning *guilt*; the latter as *moral pollution*. The whole context prohibits our regarding the language as referring to any thing *ceremonial*. The guilt contracted, and requiring remission, is the guilt of "*piercing*," that is, of putting to death, the true, divinely promised, Messiah; and the "*uncleanness*" points to those unholy and hellish principles and dispositions in the soul, from which the guilt originated; by which the fearful act was prompted. The guilt was deep. The *act* of "*piercing*" the divine Messiah is expressly ascribed to them; not merely because it was by their fathers that it had literally been done; but because of their own *assent* and *consent* to the commission of it; the assent of their judgments, misguided, like those of their fathers, by earthly-minded prejudice and selfish pride; and the consent of their hearts, uniting with those of their fathers in hatred and haughty scorn of the crucified Nazarene. The deed with which, by such assent and consent, they had made themselves, along with their fathers, chargeable, was, of all ever perpetrated on earth, that which involved the largest amount and variety of flagrant turpitude. It was the effect and indication of the hatred of God and of all goodness. And thus the depth of moral debasement and vileness was fearful from which they who had been guilty of it required to be purified.

2. Observe in the next place, HOW THESE BLESSINGS ARE PROVIDED FOR THEM. "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness."

"*In that day.*" The phrase occurs *six times* in the preceding chapter. In the text, it has more especial reference to the *last* of the six—"In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon:"* and "*in that day*"—the

* Chap. xii. 11.

day of the mourning, the day when the need is specially felt,—the fountain shall be opened. Let us consider, then, *What is the fountain? When was it first opened? How was it—or rather how is it to be opened, at the time specified in our text? For what purposes and for what persons?*

i. *What is the fountain?* We cannot be at any loss here. Were guilt and forgiveness alone in question, we should regard the “fountain” as being simply a figure for the blood of the Saviour’s atonement. But cleansing from pollution being evidently included, we are constrained to consider the fountain as a twofold figure; as comprehending the means of the latter, as well as of the former; the grace of Christ’s Spirit, as well as the virtue of Christ’s blood: whatever is necessary for both ends.

We the less revolt from this blending in one figure two things in their nature distinct, by the consideration, that the blessings in question are never, in point of fact, separate from each other, but always found *in union*: and by the further consideration, that the means through which both are secured are, in like manner, always conjoined—the virtue of the blood and the grace of the Spirit. These truths are finely illustrated by a passage in the first Epistle of John; in which there is an evident allusion to a fact in the narrative of our Lord’s death:—“Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.”* The *fact* here referred to, is that stated in the Gospel by John.† The fact is one which the physiology of anatomy has shown to be a demonstration of the reality of our Lord’s death. John converts it into an emblem of the twofold purpose of that death. He died that sinners might be both pardoned and purified; and the two designs were emblematically indicated by the mingling of the blood and the water, that flowed from his pierced heart. If the two were thus blended when they flowed from

* 1 John v. 5, 6.

† John xix. 34.

the dying Saviour's side; and if an inspired writer thus regards their union as a significant type of the twofold object and effect of the Saviour's dying; we seem to be sufficiently warranted in regarding both as included in the figure of the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness:" in understanding the fountain to mean at once the blood of Christ's atonement, and the grace of Christ's Spirit; the one required for forgiveness, and the other for regeneration and cleansing: the two, however, as before hinted, being inseparable; the faith which interests in the pardoning virtue of the blood being the product of the grace of the Spirit; and the grace of the Spirit effecting the renewal and sanctification of the soul by means of the doctrine which makes known the pardoning virtue of the blood: it being the same faith, under the agency of the same Spirit, which at once justifies and sanctifies. And it is thus that the blood is represented as the means of *purifying* as well as of procuring pardon. "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." * And here you will observe, there was, under the law, the same mingling of the blood and the water, the means of pardon and of purification, to which reference has already been made. The transaction to which the Apostle, in this passage, alludes, he specifies more particularly in the subsequent verses:—"For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you."† And the two things are thus associated as both comprehended in the purpose for which Jesus died: "Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of

* Heb. ix. 13, 14.

† Verses 19, 20.

good works." * "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." † "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." ‡

ii. We ask, again, *When* was this fountain opened? You will all, at once, mentally answer—'*When Christ died*; when his blood was shed on the cross, for the remission of sins; when the blood and the water flowed in union from his pierced side.' *Then* truly the fountain was "opened." Then it was filled, and proclaimed accessible. It was then opened, for the remission of the very same guilt for which it is represented as opened in our text. Our Lord said to his Apostles ere he left the world—"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." § And accordingly, the proclamation *did* "begin at Jerusalem." It was made, in the very first instance, to the murderers of "the Lord of glory." Through the atoning virtue of the blood shed, the guilt of shedding it was forgiven; yes, even that guilt!—and the stony hearts of those whose "wicked hands" had shed it were "turned to flesh," and filled with love to that Saviour whose blood they had, with frantic wildness, joined in imprecating on themselves and on their children!

But, while strictly and properly, the fountain was opened *then*,

* Titus ii. 14.

† 1 Pet. ii. 24.

‡ 1 John i. 5—9.

§ Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

—it might be said to have been opened from the time when it came first to be needed,—from the time when man sinned. It was then opened by anticipation. The first promise opened it. The moment man became a sinner, he needed the two blessings of pardon and sanctification. And on the ground of what was to be done in “the fulness of the time,” all the believers of ancient days had their sins forgiven and their hearts changed. All guilt and all pollution have from the beginning been, and to the end shall be, washed away in the same fountain. Our next enquiry, then, naturally is—

iii. If it was duly and properly opened at the time of Jesus’s death; and if it has virtually been opened from the time of the first promise, how is it here said *to be* opened “*in that day?*” The answer is—that, although there have, now and then, since the judgments of God overtook the Jewish people for their unbelief, been instances of Jews brought to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour, and to obtain salvation by faith in him; yet to the large mass of that dispersed, and for the time divinely abandoned people, the fountain has not been open. It has been sealed; sealed by themselves; and for their unbelief, judicially sealed by God. And just as, when the time of mercy arrives, “the vail which has been upon their hearts shall be taken away,” so that they shall see clearly the claims of Jesus, and say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!”—so the fountain shall, in God’s providence, and by God’s grace, be opened for their cleansing from their guilt and their pollution. It is said of them, “They shall look on me whom they have pierced, and *shall mourn.*”^{*} They shall mourn over all the sins that “pierced and nailed him to the tree;” and especially for their “blood-guiltiness” in shedding it. But the same *look*—the look of faith to that dying Saviour—will impart to them a sense of God’s pardoning mercy; will thus be the means of healing the very wounds it has inflicted; will give them “peace with God;” will change their mourning into joy. Thus it was with

* Chap. xii. 10.

the first Jewish believers. When their views of Him whom they had crucified were savingly changed; when, from regarding him as a hateful blasphemer, they came to regard him as a divine and divinely commissioned atoning Saviour,—what a sudden, and what an entire transition in the state of their minds! Those who were “pricked in their hearts,” and, in helpless desperation, cried out “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” came at once, through divine illumination, to throw themselves on divine mercy, through the atoning virtue of the blood shed on Calvary, and thus to a “joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” Thus too shall it be with the restored Israelites. Individually, in their several dispersions, they will find “joy and peace in believing:”—and when, looking together on the crucified One, their consciences are again awakened; their joint iniquities rise up before them, and fill them afresh with “lamentation and mourning, and woe,” as well as with doubts and fears; so that they gaze wistfully one on another, and say, “Is there hope for us?”—some one or more amongst them, clearer in spiritual discernment, and stronger in faith, may point them to the Cross, not only as the consummation of man’s guilt, but as also the consummation of God’s mercy; remind them of the pentecostal converts; exhort them to a like faith and a like joy; and thus, by the divine blessing, render the Cross, the thought of which had broken their hearts, the instrument of their effectual healing. A sense of divine love through the great propitiation will thus take a firmer and fuller occupancy of their souls. They will be filled with “the joy of God’s salvation.” “The joy of the Lord will be their strength.”

iv. The next question—“*For what purposes?*” we have already, from necessity, to a great extent, answered. The purposes, we have seen, are *two*—the washing away of *guilt*, and the washing away of *moral defilement*. Both these purposes were in the mind of God, as to be alike effected by the mediation of his Son. That the *guilt* of sin might be fully taken away, and thus the sinner escape its punishment, *atonement* was necessary. We learn this,

not from any *a priori* reasonings of our own with regard to the divine character, and the divine law, and the claims of the divine government, and the security of the honour of the divine throne: for such matters are "too high for us,"—too high for any created minds. We learn it from *what God has himself actually done*. He can do nothing but what is best. *Best* and *only* are, in His administration, words of equivalent meaning. He has chosen to pardon sin on the ground of an atonement: and we are therefore quite sure, that such atonement was essential. The blood of Immanuel—the blood from which the fountain in our text was supplied—never would have been shed; the hands, and feet, and temples, and side, whence it flowed, had never been "pierced," had it been "possible"—possible in consistency with the glory of God and the good of the universe,—that it should be forgiven, and its penalty remitted, without the shedding of it. The infatuated and high-minded Jews,—though the doctrine of atonement by blood had been all along taught by the ceremonial of their law,—taught every time a victim had been slain at the altar,—every time the blood of such victim had been sprinkled before the mercy-seat—(the grand lesson of the entire sacrificial system having been, that "without shedding of blood there was no remission;") these infatuated and high-minded Jews had no conception of this being one of the chief ends,—nay the very chief end—of the mission of their Messiah. They did not feel their need of it. They were Abraham's seed. They were the Lord's people. His sanctuary was amongst them. He was "their king, their lawgiver, their judge." They "rested on the law, and made their boast of God." They pronounced sentence, with haughty severity, against the Gentiles, while they were quite unconscious that the sentence was, in a more deeply aggravated form, their own. They needed no such blood as that shed on Calvary to take away *their* guilt. They themselves shed the blood; little dreaming that in doing so they were providing the only fountain in which the guiltiness of the deed could be washed away,—or indeed the guilt of any sin whatever.

There were thousands among them who, on Pentecost and afterwards, were brought to a better mind; were convicted of sin, and led to the "fountain" to have it washed away. And thus shall it be with those who—two thousand years, it may be, later in the world's history—shall come to see and to feel their need of a Saviour; to "look on him whom they have pierced, and to mourn and be in bitterness." They will see, in the blood of Him whom they have thus pierced, the divinely opened fountain, in which alone they can "wash and be clean." And they will find, in their blessed experience, that that blood has not lost its virtue; that it still avails for them, as it did for those of their fathers who, at the very first, had recourse to it. Jesus, in promising his Spirit to accompany the ministry of his Apostles, assured them—"When he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."* Thus these Jews, when the promise is fulfilled of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit upon them, as "the Spirit of grace and of supplications," shall be convinced of *sin*, because they believed not on Him; "Convinced of his *righteousness*," as the only ground of acceptance with God, and certified as a divinely sufficient one by his having "gone to the Father;" and "convinced of *judgment*," because "the prince of this world"—the original tempter, the old serpent, by whose artful devices sin was brought to enter into our world and blight it, "is judged;" his sentence being, by the death of Jesus on the cross, on which he "spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it,"—virtually passed and pronounced.

And, as we have said, there is *water* as well as blood: there is provision in the fountain for purity as well as for pardon,—for the washing away of pollution, as well as of guilt. Coming to this fountain, they shall be *doubly washed*;

* John xvi. 8—11.

for such appears to be the intended meaning of the Apostle, when to the Corinthians, after enumerating a variety of the vilest of characters, he says—"And such were some of you; but ye are *washed*,"—(this is the one comprehensive term, inclusive of both the two which follow)—"but ye are *sanctified*, but ye are *justified*"—(the two essential descriptions of "*washing*")—"in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Washed in this laver, they shall be "a holy nation" in a higher sense than even their fathers of old;—really *sanctified*; set apart to the service of Jehovah, and divinely fitted for it: made holy, for the holy worship and service of the holy God. They will then "worship Him" in "the beauty of holiness." With hearts renewed, they will "walk in newness of life." They will be brought, by the cleansing efficacy of this fountain, into harmony with the purity and consecration to God of the millennial world. While the one promise of the covenant shall be verified in their blessed experience—"their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more,"—so will also the others—no less "exceeding great and precious,"—"I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest:"—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations."* Such, to them, as

* Ezek xxxvi. 25—28, 31.

to all believers, shall be the blessed effects of their washing by faith, in this "fountain" divinely "opened" "for sin and for uncleanness." Then—when "the Deliverer shall come out of Zion," and shall "turn away ungodliness from Jacob,"—the terms of the Psalmist will become applicable to them again, and more emphatically than ever,—“Blessed is the people that is in such a case: yea, blessed is that people whose God is the Lord!”

v. Our last question was—“*For what persons?*” In making this a distinct question, I had in my eye the peculiar terms here used. It is not simply said for the restored of Israel,—but “for *the house of David* and for *the inhabitants of Jerusalem.*” The idea thus conveyed is that of *all ranks*,—“high and low, rich and poor together,” from the royal occupants of the palace to the tenants of the meanest dwelling in Jerusalem. The terms correspond to those used respecting the previous “mourning:” “The land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.” All shall be stricken through with the conviction and alarm: all shall feel the bitterness of contrition: all shall mourn. And *for all*, in like manner, the fountain shall be opened. All shall need it. All shall have access to it. All shall avail themselves of it. The pardon and the sanctity will be common blessings; bestowed alike on king and people. And the hearts of all shall be united in gratitude for the blessings, “as the heart of one man.”

But we must not confine our observations to others; as if we had no interest in the opening of this fountain *ourselves*. It is not a fountain opened for Jews alone, whether in past time or in time to come. It is a fountain for Gentile as well as for Jew; a fountain for ALL; a fountain for us. In both views of its nature and design, all stand in need of it. No sinner on earth can be accepted in the sight of God, without having been washed in it. In terms corresponding to the figure here used, the “multitude which no man can number” are, in the Book of Revelation, described as “standing

before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands," "crying with a loud voice—Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb:" and the reason of their having their place there is thus given:—"They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; *therefore* are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple:" a figure which abundantly bears us out in speaking of the fountain being one of blood. The blood here washes to pure whiteness the robes of the vilest. They are the robes of justifying righteousness, and of personal holiness: and both are obtained, as the costume of heaven, by faith in atoning blood. *All have sinned; and all are sinful.* All need forgiveness; all need cleansing. And let them try what other fountains they please, their raiment will still retain its stains of pollution. In none can it be washed clean save in this. All must come to it, if they would find a place in heaven. None can find admission into the temple above, but as having washed in this laver. It stands at the threshold, provided for all who desire to enter there. And no one—not the monarch any more than the beggar; not the most virtuous in the world's estimate, any more than the most vile; can enter otherwise. There is no exception; no special favour; all are alike. He who will not wash cannot set foot within the threshold. And remember,—it is no mere ceremonial cleansing. While we use figures taken from such cleansing, it is something more real and spiritual that is meant by them. We have heard much of late about sacramental efficacy in imparting fitness for the kingdom of heaven. And an amount of silly and self-contradictory absurdity has been spoken and written on the subject, such as almost betrays one at times into the imagination, that instead of living in the middle of the nineteenth century, our time is the middle of the dark ages. Away with the pitiful delusion! Neither to man, woman, or child can the water of baptism impart regenerating or purifying virtue: nor can the bread and wine of the supper of the Lord impart justifying grace: any

more than the holy water or the bloodless sacrifice of popish superstition. Nothing but a simple faith in the true atoning blood of the Cross can justify: and nothing but the same faith,—or the blood of sprinkling, reaching the heart and conscience by that faith, under the influence of the divine Spirit, can renew and sanctify. You may just as well trust in penances, in counting beads, in repeating Aves and Pater-nosters, and in extreme unction, for ensuring heaven, as trust in any virtue possessed by either of the two protestant sacraments. It is not the signs, but the things signified by them, that are of any real service to sinners. Beware of the strong propensity to *externalize* religion. All that is merely outward in its observances, comes under the designation of “weak and beggarly elements,” altogether inefficacious and fruitless of good,—just as much as any of the external ritual of the ancient economy.

Remember, then—for the lesson is all-important,—that there is but ONE FOUNTAIN that has any virtue to wash away sin,—the fountain of the Redeemer’s blood and of the Spirit’s grace. All attempts to rid yourselves of either your guilt or your sinfulness will be vain, if you refuse the “fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness.” Just as when Naaman said—“Are not Abana and Pharpar, waters of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?” No. The rivers of Damascus might be better than all the waters of Israel: but the Jordan was the appointed cure; and no water but that of the Jordan could touch his leprosy. Had he persisted in refusing to use it, he must have continued “a leper till the day of his death.” In like manner, sinners may fancy to themselves various ways in which their cleansing from sin may be effected—especially in its *guilt*, about which they are ever most solicitous, caring little about being washed from its defilement, if they are but saved from its condemnation and punishment: but in no way can they ever succeed, but by coming to this fountain. The peremptory and oft-repeated assurance of God’s word is, that there is no salvation otherwise; that nothing can avail for remission of guilt but the

blood of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world." And by none let it be forgotten, that there is no possibility of being washed from sin's guilt without being at the same time washed from its uncleanness. All pretensions to the one without the other, are a vain delusion. And were our views of sin, and our feelings in regard to it, more what they ought to be, we should be sensible, that to be washed from sin's pollution is quite as essential to our happiness as being washed from its guilt. Without the former, heaven would to us be a mere name. The place and the inhabitant would be out of all congruity. To an unrenewed and unsanctified soul, indeed,—a soul remaining in its native pollution, and under the power of "enmity against God," heaven would be hell. If we are ever to reach heaven, we must first be fitted for it; "washed—sanctified as well as justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

LECTURE XXI.

ZECH. XIII. 2—6.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.”

WE have to remark again, as we have remarked before, that in this passage the time is *future*,—future *from the days of the Prophet*; and that the reference, therefore, cannot be to the period of the return from Babylon. We have endeavoured at some length to show that the period referred to is that of the final restoration of the Jewish people in their personal conversion, and their national re-settlement in the land of their fathers.

In the first of these verses Jehovah gives assurance of the purity of his own worship in contradistinction to all idolatry and superstition. It has been thought by some, that the language must refer to the return from Babylon; because it is a known fact, that from that time idol-worship actually

ceased among the Jews. Nothing is to be found, in their subsequent history, of the idolatries of their fathers, or of any other forms of "that abominable thing which God hates." Bishop Horsley, indeed, questions this; alleging, that, although national or public idolatry ceased, there was still to be found amongst them the more private practice of the sin, —personal and domestic idolatry. Even this allegation, however, would require stronger evidence. And the universal belief, that idol-worship ceased at the return from Babylon, is probably the true one. How, then, it has been asked, (and the question is a natural and fair one) comes the abolition of idolatry to be here predicted as a future thing? how could that be abolished which had not for thousands of years existed? To this question various answers have been offered.

1. Dr. Henderson substitutes for "*the land*" "*the earth*;" and considers the prediction as one, not of the doing away of idolatry among the Jews, but throughout the world at large. But though the same word means the earth as well as the land, and is many a time so rendered, the connexion alone determining the sense, the explanation seems hardly admissible here. The prophecy in the passage has immediate relation to *the land of Israel*:* and to change the import of the term so suddenly from the particular to the general—from the *land* to the *earth*,—appears too great a liberty to be tolerated, unless in a case of absolute necessity. Is this such a case? We cannot think so.

2. It has been supposed, again, to signify the putting away of the idolatries with which the land had been polluted, during the period of the long dispersions of the original and rightful occupants of it,—by its *interim* possessors. There is room, however, to question, whether those possessors, though "enemies of the Cross of Christ," have been, in the strict sense of the designation, idolaters. By others, therefore, it has been alleged,

3. That the Jews, in their dispersions, have, through fear

* Compare chap. xi. 6; and chap. xii. 12.

of persecution and suffering, been tempted to conform to what may be termed, although the phraseology is self-contradictory,—*Christian* idolatries; meaning, of course, Christian in opposition to *Heathen*; *Anti-christian* being their proper designation. Thus Scott—"Idolatry and superstition have been, and are, very prevalent in many parts of the Christian Church: and, whilst this has formed one grand hindrance to the conversion of the Jews, it has also ensnared many of them, by inducing them to idolatrous practices, to avoid persecution. But about the time here predicted, all these Anti-christian abominations will be terminated; and the converted Jews will watch very carefully against every appearance of such abuses." I should conceive, however, that such conformity amongst the dispersed Jews to the idolatries of popery have been very limited, partial, and temporary; the product of fear, not an adoption of the system with which they have been connected. It could not be said, moreover, that such idolatries ever were *in the land*, and could hardly, therefore, in strict propriety, be spoken of as "*cut off out of it*." I would observe, therefore,

4. That the terms may fairly be interpreted as expressing the *completeness* of the purification of God's worship; its being more perfect than ever before: It is not merely said, "I will cut off *the idols*"—but "I will cut off *the names of the idols*, out of the land." The terms are strong. They are the same as those used of old by Jehovah, when expressing His abhorrence of all such practices, and warning His people against every approach to them, as peculiarly odious in His eyes.* The meaning, then, may simply be, that the cessation of all false worship would be *thorough*; there being no lingering or hankering after any form of such worship; the very "names of the idols" being—not only not mentioned, but not so much as remembered; their names and their memory perishing,—and Jehovah alone being served, and his name alone adored,

* Exod. xxiii. 13; Deut. xii. 3, &c., &c.

—through the one Mediator, and under the influence of the One Spirit.*

The next thing of which we have assurance, in the close of the second and subsequent verses, may be stated generally as *the admitted completeness of divine revelation*.

The Jewish people were taught by their own lawgiver the crime and the peril of adding to, or taking from, God's words.† And so are we warned in the very closing declaration of the inspired Volume.‡

The following particulars may here be noticed:—1. It is assumed, that there should still arise pretenders to divine communications—to prophetic inspirations. It is not a mere IF—a mere supposition of what might be; it is evidently a statement of what was to be. It is not hypothesis, but reality. If this is not clear from the first of the verses, it is from those which follow. In this, therefore, it is implied, that the spiritual restoration, though general, will not be universal. Among those who return there will be found counterfeits,—individuals who are not fully reclaimed from their unbelief and worldliness. And, by the way, is not this an additional proof that the restoration does *not* mean, simply their *conversion*? For in that case, such scenes as are here described could not well be imagined as taking place.

2. It is implied, that then there can be *no true prophets*,—no really inspired and divinely commissioned men. Do

* “In order,” says Hengstenberg, in commenting on the verse.—“in order to express the idea of the removal of every form of ungodliness from the forgiven people, the Prophet selects two specific examples, idolatry and false prophecy, which had been most rife in the earlier times, particularly in the days of Jeremiah, in whose prophecies Zechariah ‘lived and moved.’ We can draw no conclusion from this as to its prevalence in the Prophet’s own times, or in the future which he describes. The peculiar manifestation is simply an accident; the essence is ungodliness, which is always the same. . . . The expressions ‘to cut off the names,’ and ‘that they be no more remembered,’ denote the most complete extermination. Compare Hosea ii. 17. With regard to the latter, Calvin has well observed, ‘His meaning is that the hatred of superstition will be so great, that the people will shudder even at the very name.’”—ED.

† Deut. iv. 2; xiii. 32.

‡ Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

you ask me *why*? My answer is—because divine revelation having been perfected, there can remain nothing to be added to it, no new communications; nothing, therefore, for which inspiration can require to be given; nothing which any man can be commissioned, with suitable credentials, to teach in God's name. Malachi completed the old revelation: John in Patmos completed the new. We have no reason to think there will ever be a third. The prophets here spoken of, accordingly, are all *false prophets*. They are coupled with "*the unclean spirit*," under whose influence they are manifestly understood to be. "The prophets and the unclean spirit" are made to "pass out of the land" together: and the case subsequently supposed is that of one "*speaking lies* in the name of the LORD." That by "the unclean spirit"—so called by way of eminence,—is meant Satan, the father of lies and of all impurity and vileness, I need not take time to prove. Under his perverting influence were all the false prophets in former days: and under the same influence have been, and will be, all false teachers in Christian times. He passes himself for even more than "an angel of light;" and makes men believe they are speaking from God, when they are only announcing his delusions. I mean not to say that this was always the case. The false prophets, in most instances, knew themselves to be impostors. They were rather in league with Satan than deluded by him to fancy their oracles divine. And so it has been with the large proportion of false teachers and miracle-workers under the Christian Economy. Thus testifies Paul respecting all the pretensions of "the man of sin"—"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders:"*—"lying wonders" signifying—not *real miracles attesting lies*—for such, we believe, there never were, under the divine administration, from the beginning, but miracles which both attested lies and *were themselves lies*,—deceptions of Satan, practised by men under his seductive power. All pretended *additions* to divine revelation must now be *lies*; even re-

* 2 Thess. ii. 9.

garded simply as *additions*, although they should not be out of harmony with the divine communications we already have: and much more so, if they venture aught in opposition to these. This “unclean spirit”—this spirit of moral impurity—is what John distinguishes from “the Spirit of truth” as “*the spirit of error*.” It was this impure and lying spirit that possessed and actuated the diviners and sooth-sayers of heathen superstition. And it is the same spirit that possesses and actuates all the Anti-christian deceivers of our own times. This is one of the worst of Satanic devices,—palming *lies*—and that too for purposes of pollution, on the God of truth and purity.

3. The attempts of these deceivers *fail*. They are the exceptions. The general mind is against them. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, our Lord forewarned his disciples that “*many* false prophets should arise, and should *deceive many*.” And so it came to pass. But such is not to be the case in the time here predicted. These “false prophets” are neither to be “*many*,” nor are they to “*deceive many*.” They are to meet with no encouragement; or, if any, but partial and temporary. The entire style of expression:—“I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land,” distinctly intimates that no extensive or enduring success shall then attend Satan and his emissaries. They are to disappear, quickly, and for ever.

Still more strongly is the determined opposition to them set forth in verse *third*:—“And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.” The words carry us back to the Mosaic law:—“If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from

thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.”* In this fearful and peremptory injunction there was involved the grand and all-important principle, that the authority and the glory of Jehovah must stand the first of all considerations in the estimation of His subjects; must be first in their desires, first in their aims, first in the determination of their purposes and the guidance of their conduct. A regard to these must take precedence of all earthly affections and obligations. The tenderest and most powerful of the heart’s native impulses must yield to it—the strongest claims of the closest kindred. And this is the same principle, the operation of which the divine Saviour claims for himself—“He that loveth father or mother—son or daughter—*more than me*, is not worthy of me.” It was acting in conformity to this principle that drew upon the tribe of Levi Jehovah’s approbation and blessing. At the time of the defection of Israel in the worship of the golden calf, they executed faithfully and impartially the divine commission,—laying the feelings of nature under a determined interdict:—“When Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’s side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from

* Deut. xiii. 6—11.

gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves to-day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.”* “And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.”† It is probable, at least, that these words of the dying lawgiver had reference to the conduct described in the previously cited passage;—it was an act of judicial infliction, avenging the fearful dishonour put upon Jehovah.

“*Propheying lies*” may possibly refer to such persons as should be found still maintaining that the Messiah was yet to come; and thus persisting in setting aside the claims of that very *Jesus of Nazareth* on whom the whole house of Israel had just been represented as “looking” and “mourning.”

Was the punishment here mentioned to be *literally* inflicted? Or do the words only mean, that, *should* any one attempt such imposture,—be guilty of such profane presumption,—utter such blasphemy,—so deep would be the general abhorrence, that he should not be screened or spared by even his nearest relations? that the impiety would be instantly put down—even the tenderness of the parental instincts giving way before the constraining force of the religious principle? It is deserving of notice, that what is here predicted is *not* in conformity to the law of Moses. The law of Moses, as just read, required that the offender should be *stoned*; and, from the expression, “Thy hand shall be first upon him, and *afterward the hand of all the people*”—it seems to

* Exod. xxxii. 25—29.

† Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9.

require the death as the result of information and judicial sentence. Here, the culprit is "*thrust through*"—not stoned; and as an act of indignant and summary vengeance. It does not, moreover, appear that they are here *laid under command* so to do at all. It is simply stated as a *matter of fact*, that such shall be the strength of the principles of faith and piety, that the life of a son, around whom all the affections of nature cling, shall be held as nothing, when compared with the glory of God, and the interests of His cause.* There does not seem, then, any ground here for the conjectural inquiry, how far the Jews, on their being restored, are to be under subjection to their former *judicial law*—the *judicial*, not the *typical* and *ceremonial*. We must leave that for the time to reveal. We only observe, that the judicial and the ceremonial are, in some departments of them, so blended and interwoven with each other, that it is difficult for us to separate them, or to imagine the one obligatory without the other. Nor does it appear at all reasonable to conceive that the same amount of capital punishments which, for special reasons, existed among the Jews under the Mosaic economy, is to be continued when they come under the dispensation of the Gospel. The permanence of the *moral law* does not necessarily infer the permanence of either the *ceremonial* or the *judicial*. And we have already seen that what is here predicted is not necessarily an *injunction*; and that, if it were, it is *not* a part of the law of Moses.

The ascertained and acknowledged completeness of the canon of divine inspiration is still further manifest from the language of the fourth verse:—"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied." *In what way* the prophets were to become "ashamed" of their prophesyings

* "The prophet has expressed in his own pictorial style, the thought, that in that day love to God will be manifested with unbounded energy. If the pictorial character of the verse be overlooked, difficulties of various kinds immediately arise. . . . The severest punishment is best suited to express the thought intended by the prophet."—*Hengstenberg in loc.*—Ed.

is not said. It *may be* from their failure of fulfilment. And yet, unless they related to very near events, this seems rather too dilatory a process. Perhaps it may rather be considered as arising from their finding themselves discountenanced, shunned, condemned, loathed, by their friends and by the community generally. They shall thus be compelled by shame to relinquish their pretensions, as is intimated in what follows:—"neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:" on the margin, "*a garment of hair.*" The deception arose from this being the description of garment usually worn by the true prophets of Jehovah,* as we learn from the answer to the question of Ahab respecting the prophet who had met the messengers whom he had sent to consult the god of Ekron whether he should recover of his disease—"He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite."† The meaning, then, is, that they shall not attempt, or persist in attempting, to pass themselves off as genuine prophets of the Lord, by assuming their garb, and otherwise personating them. They shall either themselves embrace the common faith, or, at any rate, abandon the attempt at imposture as hopeless, and as bringing upon themselves discredit and danger, instead of favour, and honour, and earthly good.

Instead of thus imposing, it is intimated, that they will be put to their wits to devise pretexts for concealing their real character and escaping impending vengeance. This appears to be the general import of the next verses: "But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." Here we have, *first*, the *direct disowning* of the professional character—"I am no prophet; I am a husbandman," or "a tiller of the ground:" and, along with this, a deposition of his having been, from his youth up, in a condition of society from which no prophet

* See 2 Kings i. 8.

† Compare it with the account of John the Baptist, Matt. iii. 4.

of God ever was taken. You may be surprised at my saying so, when you look at our English translation—"for men taught me to keep cattle from my youth." Scott has it, "for man possessed me," that is, as his servant, "from my youth:" and Dr. Henderson translates the words—"for I have been *in a state of slavery* from my youth."* Then, *secondly*, not only will each of them thus disown the character and profession of a prophet, but when pressed with questions such as put them to their shifts, they will have recourse to evasions, to ensure their safety;—"They shall say unto him,"—or, "And *it shall be said* unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." The *question* is conceived to have reference to the practice of having marks made in the hands or on other parts of the body, in honour of different idols, and as indicative of the devotedness of their worshippers. These are pointed to as awakening suspicion—If you really belong to Jehovah, *whence those marks?* Are not these the scars of your idol? The answer is obviously meant to be understood as an *evasive* one; the best that occurred to lay the suspicion: "Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends." The answer being designed as evasive, it might not be necessary for us to find an explanation. The scars might have been got accidentally; or they might be inflicted in the way of correction; or they might be those of an attached master, fixing him as his servant for ever,—like the Hebrew practice of boring the ear with an awl to the door-post. But by much the most natural interpretation is, that the words refer to the infliction of scars upon the body *for the dead* as expressions and badges of grief: a practice to which there are frequent allusions in Scripture; and which was forbidden to the Israelites, as being a

* Hengstenberg renders, "*for a man has sold me from my youth.*" So also Rosenmüller. Luther has "*I have served man,*" &c. The rendering of Grotius is singular—*Quoniam Adam exemplum meum ab adolescentia mea!*—ED.

custom among idolaters.* The meaning, then, in the passage before us is—that when appealed to, in opposition to their denial of their connexion with any idol, as to the marks in their hands, they would endeavour to get quit of this proof by alleging that they were no more than the customary scars of grief, inflicted, on account of death, “in the house of their friends.”†

I am aware how naturally the words call up to the mind the wounds of Him whose hands and feet were pierced with the nails that fastened Him to the tree; and how common it is to apply the phraseology thus *to Him*. But there does not appear the slightest foundation for so understanding it. I do not say this on the ground taken by Dr. Henderson—that “in no tolerable sense could the Jews be called his lovers, or friends, seeing they hated both him and his Father:” for they might, in a certain sense, be so called, as being his countrymen and kindred; just as it is said of him—“he came unto *his own*; and his own received him not.” But the connexion will not at all bear such interpretation. We have given what appears to be the only natural explanation. It is true, that in the very next verse, we have a direct and pointed prediction of the Messiah. There is reason, however, to believe it was a distinct prophecy, given at another time, and having no connexion with what we have been expounding; although now, in our Bibles, standing in juxtaposition to it. And both because of its distinctness, and because of its importance, we have left it for separate consideration. Meantime, let us see if there are any lessons for us in the verses which have been under review. Observe, then—

1. We learn the lesson of *maintaining*, with all earnestness, *the purity of Christian doctrine and Christian worship*. Jude exhorts the believers to whom he writes, that they

* See Lev. xix. 28; Deut. xiv. 1; Jer. xvi. 6; and more particularly as to *cuttings in the hands*—Jer. xlviii. 37.

† Henderson takes the same view, and Hengstenberg says, “We subscribe to the opinion of those who believe that reference is here made to the wounds commonly inflicted in connexion with idolatrous worship.”—Ed.

should "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." And yet Paul says, "The servant of the Lord *must not strive*." The "contending," then, must be something different from *strife*. It is the steadfastly determined maintenance of God's truth and of God's worship; but with due discrimination, and by legitimate means. *With due discrimination*. There are points both of doctrine and of worship, that are of very different degrees of importance. There are false doctrines, by which the grace of the Gospel is subverted, and by which, therefore, its saving efficacy is destroyed, and souls are deluded and ruined. It is against *these* that it becomes us to contend *most* earnestly; with all the zeal which piety and benevolence,—which concern at once for the glory of God and the best interests of men,—ought ever to inspire. We cannot be more than enough in earnest here. The zeal can never exceed in degree the degree of importance which attaches to both these objects. And the same may well be said of those *idolatrics*, which have been introduced into the Antichristian church, under the pretended sanction of Christianity, but in reality so to accommodate the Christian worship to that of heathenism, as to lessen its offensiveness in the eyes of the worshippers of the "gods many and lords many" of pagan mythology. Hence the origin of the worship of angels and saints, and the virgin Mary, and pictures and images. We cannot be too zealous against this and other monstrous corruptions, belonging to that system of superstition, on which, according to "the words of the Book of prophecy," there hangs the curse of offended heaven. But few things can be more absurd, and, were it not for the mischief of it, more ridiculous, than for a man to expend all the energies of a fiery zeal in regard to points, whether as to doctrine or worship, which do not affect the essential principles of saving truth, but leave the foundation of the sinner's hope, and the glory of God's character and government in saving him, unaffected and secure. It is true, that whatever is worth our Master's commanding must be worth our minding and doing; and that about no part of His truth or of His

will ought we to be indifferent. But still let our zeal be duly proportioned, in its exercise, to the comparative magnitude of the matters about which it puts forth its efforts, and the ends at which it aims. Above all, let us never be so pitifully perverse, as to be all hot about the smaller, and comparatively cold about the greater and weightier matters, of truth and of duty. And then, let us see to it, that our zeal pursue its ends by *legitimate means*. Whatever he meant by the terms in this passage—"he shall thrust him through when he prophesieth," we are abundantly sure that such is not *our law*. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Our Master and Lord hath assured us, that, in His cause—in the propagation and defence of His truth, and the advancement of His kingdom, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." Our only sword must be "the sword of the Spirit." This is the sword which our "most mighty" Lord "girds upon his thigh," when He goes forth "conquering and to conquer," and "subdues the people under him." He admits of no other in His service. The only "thrusting through" which has His sanction is—the piercing of the heart and the conscience with this divine weapon. No other can possibly subdue consciences and hearts, and so make men true spiritual subjects. To get the lips without the heart,—the prostrations of the body without the bowing of the willing and captive soul,—is but to obtain the homage of hypocrisy; the very thing which, more than aught else, "the Lord abhorreth." Hence—

2. While we must beware of palliating or covering over aught that is specially offensive to God, in any spirit of accommodation to the known predilections and practices of even our dearest earthly friends,—we must equally beware of imitating the simulation and hypocrisy here imputed to the devotees of idolatry or of corrupted Christianity. Such deceit and lying are worthy of such a cause. But in the cause of God, of Christ, of divine truth, all must be—"not fleshly wisdom," but "simplicity and godly sincerity." Falsehood is of a piece with the system, when it is employed by the votaries of false gods. But in the service of the true

God, and the God of truth, all that is false and deceitful is out of character and out of place. Whatever be the hazard to ourselves, truth must not be violated. We must run all risks, rather than speak or act deceitfully. Not even the highest of all ends—the glory of God—is allowed, by the moral principles of THE BIBLE, to vindicate “doing evil that good may come.” We must beware of the Jesuitical principle, sanctioned by that Antichristian system to which we have referred,—that *the end sanctifies the means*: that we may lie, and swear falsely, and deceive, and murder, for the good of the Church and for the glory of God. We can never promote God’s glory by breaking God’s law. We can never ultimately advance the interests of the Church, by setting aside the very principles on which the Church is founded, and by which it is maintained. Never let us for a moment imagine, that the interests of truth can be promoted by the violation of truth. The character of the “Israelite indeed” is—that “in his spirit there is *no guile*.” In times of persecution, the temptations have often been strong to prevarication and concealment. Fear made even Peter deny his Lord. And others besides Peter have been thus overcome. But we honour the martyrs who, rather than utter a word of insincerity, or do an act, even though their heart was not going along with it, that conveyed a false impression of their faith or their feelings to the minds of others,—would be bound to the stake, or lay their heads on the block. The terms of discipleship to Jesus are, in his own words, “Whoso loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” And—“If any man come unto me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” We may deceive men: we cannot deceive God. “All things are naked and opened to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” A HEART GIVEN TO GOD UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF TRUE FAITH IN HIS SON, WILL ALONE DO AT THE JUDGMENT SEAT.

LECTURE XXII.

ZECH. XIII. 7—9; XIV. 1—3.

“Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones. And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God. Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.”

TOWARDS the close of last Lecture, we applied an observation to the passage now read, which, in studying the writings of the prophets, requires to be always kept in mind,—that the mere juxtaposition of chapters and verses in our Bibles must not be regarded as implying an unbroken connexion of the various portions of each book as they here lie before us:—that the prophets received their communications as it pleased the Spirit of God, “at sundry times and in diverse manners;” so that between portions which, in our Bibles, appear connected with each other, there might have intervened, in regard to their communication to the prophet’s mind, considerable intervals of time. We endeavoured to show, that the immediately preceding verses have no such connexion with the beginning of the passage now

read for lecture, that the one can be at all used as explanatory of the other. The probability is, that at the seventh verse of chapter thirteenth, a new prophecy commences. The topics which the verses read bring before us are,—the sufferings and death of Immanuel; the subsequent siege and destruction of Jerusalem; the slaughter and captivity of a large portion of its inhabitants and of the population of Judea generally; the execution of divine judgments on those enemies of the Jewish people who were the instruments of the judicial vengeance; and the trials and final restoration of the remnant of Israel that should be left from the exterminating sword. The topics do not stand exactly in the order in which I have mentioned them; but such seem *to be* the topics: and as those which come last have been in part before us already, and interesting as they are, are not *so* interesting as that which presents itself *first*, we purpose dwelling most largely on that which possesses the strongest attractions, and the greatest real importance—THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF IMMANUEL:—"Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts; smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."

Let us see how the words are applied by an authority which all Christians must regard as the very highest. "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."* I cannot regard the Saviour as here merely *accommodating* the language of the prophet to his own circumstances and those of his disciples. His words were evidently calculated to produce the impression that now one of the prophetic predictions was receiving its fulfilment:—and shall we imagine "the faithful witness" deliberately making such an impression, by applying to himself language which, when used by the prophet, had no such reference, and no such meaning? This could never be. The application

* Matt. xxvi. 31.

of the words by Jesus to himself is an obvious and sufficient warrant for our understanding and discussing them as having a direct and exclusive reference to Him.* So understanding them, let us contemplate—

1. In the first place, the VICTIM TO BE SMITTEN. He comes before us under a twofold aspect, the *official* and the *personal*:—"My Shepherd;"—"the man my fellow." It is Jehovah, the Eternal Father, that speaks. This will appear more fully by and by. Meanwhile it requires to be kept in mind, as to *both* the views mentioned. First, the *official*—"My Shepherd." The designation presupposes a *flock*, and *Jehovah's flock*. A shepherd and a flock are essential to each other. The shepherd here is one who fulfils a shepherd's functions by the appointment of another. He had himself a proprietary right in the flock as well as He for whom He acted; but here He appears, as elsewhere, in the capacity of a servant. Jehovah many times represents His people—both the typical and the spiritual Israel, under the image of a flock. Here they are His flock, cared for by a *deputed* guardian and guide.

Under the character of a *shepherd* Messiah is repeatedly the subject of prophecy.† And the designation, you are aware, is one which Jesus not merely assumes as if it belonged to him in common with others, but exclusively and emphatically appropriates as pertaining to himself alone: "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling,

* "All these explanations" (such explanations as find "any other shepherd" in the passage "than the Messiah") "are at variance not only with the words of Christ, but also, and most decidedly, with the expression which immediately follows, 'upon a man my fellow.'"—*Hengstenberg in loc.*—Ed.

† Ezek. xxxiv. 23; Isa. xl. 10, 11.

and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."*

Then we have the *personal* aspect of him who was to be smitten—"the man who is my fellow." Of the words various renderings have been given:—the man my companion—my friend—my associate—my confidant—my equal; the man whom I have associated with myself; the man who is united to me. They convey the idea of communion, fellowship on equal terms, union, equality.† When we take the Bible account, given us in so many other passages, of the person of Christ, we are at no loss for the true import of the designation. Surely we may consider the language of Jesus as sufficiently appropriating to himself this part of the description when He says—claiming property in the flock equally with the Father that sent him:—"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one:"‡ and again—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."§

* John x. 2—4, 11—14.

† The term (עֵמִית) "is one of those words peculiar to the Pentateuch, and is not met with anywhere else. . . . We must therefore adhere strictly to the meaning which we find it bearing there. It occurs in the laws relating to injuries done to near relations; and is always used with peculiar emphasis, to show how great a crime it is to injure one who is related both bodily and spiritually by a common descent. It is used interchangeably as being equivalent to *brother*; a word which is invariably employed in the laws of Moses with reference to a common physical and spiritual descent."—*Hengstenberg in loc.* Compare also Henderson's note.—ED.

‡ John x. 27—30.

§ John xiv. 9.

When, as in our text, Jehovah himself holds forth this “*man*” as His fellow—His associate—His equal, are we to be charged with robbing Him of his own appropriate and exclusive glory, when we frame our ideas concerning Him, our feelings towards Him, and the homage we pay to Him, according to the terms of His own representation? So far from this, should we not rather be chargeable with presumptuous disobedience, when we believe this language to be the language of Jehovah, and capable of no other meaning than we put upon it, were we to disown the equality and withhold the homage?

Let us next contemplate—

2. The DEADLY STROKE. I cannot but understand the “*sword*” here invoked as meaning, under a bold personification, the sword of *divine justice*—of punitive, retributive righteousness. In support of this interpretation, several passages of the Old Testament may be adduced:—“For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me.”* “O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.”† “And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel, and say to the land of Israel, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I am against thee, and will draw forth my sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked. Seeing then that I will cut off from thee the righteous and the wicked, therefore shall my sword go forth out of his sheath against all flesh from the south to the north: that all flesh may know that I the LORD have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath: it shall not return any more.”‡

* Deut. xxxii. 40, 41.

† Jer. xlvii. 6, 7.

‡ Ezek. xxi. 1—5.

This is the sword that is here figuratively addressed, as slumbering, and summoned to "*awake*." The language is prophetic. It looks forward to "the fulness of the time," when the "**MAN**"—Jehovah's "**FELLOW**" was to appear. From the time of sin's entrance into the world, this sword might be said to have slept in its scabbard. Not that there had been no manifestations of God's holy justice, and avenging jealousy of His glory. In many a judgment upon mankind, both individually and collectively, the rights of God's moral government had been asserted, and the claims of His violated law vindicated. All the sufferings of mankind, from the deluge onwards, by wars, and famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, and every other form of calamity, had just been so many partial "awakings of the sword" of God's justice, to keep mankind in remembrance of His displeasure against sin, and to maintain the honour of the "throne of his holiness;"—to remind transgressors that "verily there was a God who judged in the earth." These, however, were but partial and merited inflictions. In no one of them, nor in all of them combined, was there any such satisfaction to divine justice,—any such manifestation that is of the divine abhorrence of sin, and the divine determination that it should not pass unavenged,—as to open the way for the honourable exercise of divine mercy. They were as nothing. Amidst them all it might still be said,—"*The times of this ignorance God winked at.*" He was still waiting for "*the fulness of the time.*" And when—anticipating the coming period, Jehovah says, "*Awake, O sword,*"—what might have been expected to follow? "*Awake, O sword,*" against this race of guilty and heartless rebels, who, in all successive generations, and amidst every variety of treatment,—"*though wooed and awed, blessed and chastised,*" have continued "*flagrant rebels still;*" whom neither goodness nor severity has "*led to repentance;*" whom favours have but encouraged to sin, and whom judgments have only frightened into hypocritical and temporary humiliation; who have "*made me to serve with their sins, and wearied me with their iniquities;*"—"awake," for more

extended and exemplary vengeance: "awake," and vindicate my dishonoured law and government by the destruction of these mine enemies! And it *is* indeed for the vindication of God's law and government that the "sword" is summoned to "awake:" but ah! in how different a way! It is a nobler victim that is to be smitten than the guilty themselves,—than all that the sword had smitten before, and than all that ever could be smitten by it, even to the utmost extent of the desert of punishment. It must drink richer and more precious blood. The victim is divine. The blood to be shed is the blood of Immanuel. The life to be taken is that of no mere man—no, nor of ten thousand times ten thousand such,—but of a man in union with godhead. The "sword," when called to "awake," is not to smite the sinners themselves, but their substitute—their willing, their divine substitute,—even Him, who was to "bear their sins in his own body on the tree." In the "*smiting*" must be included *all* the sufferings of Jesus, terminating in his death—his substitutionary, his atoning death. He was himself sinless; and therefore—

"All the griefs he felt were ours,
Ours all the woes he bore."

They were all the judicial infliction of Jehovah. *He* summoned the sword to "awake:" and, though wielding it through the agency of men, the stroke was His own. It came from His own hand. By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" was "that Just One" delivered up: it was Jehovah that "laid on him the iniquity of us all:" *He* "bruised him." *He* "put him to grief." *He* mingled for him, and put into his hand his cup of unutterable and inexplicable woe,—that cup which drew forth the prayer—"If this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done!" and, while drinking it, the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Yet, while thus inflicted by Jehovah, they were all, in the strictest sense, *voluntary*. He undertook the task, with the full view of all it was to cost him: "Lo I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to

do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."* And what was that "*will*" which He thus undertook so cheerfully to do? The inspired Apostle replies—"By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."†

True it is, that *as man* only could he be "smitten." But his was the manhood of "the man who was Jehovah's fellow." It was manhood in intimate personal union with deity; the manhood of "God manifest in the flesh." This gave value—and a value infinite—to the blood of his sacrifice—"his own blood." It was against HIM that the "sword" was to "awake;" and it was against HIM that, in due time, it *did* awake, and smote him to death!—"THE JUST FOR THE UNJUST,"—"THE PROPITIATION FOR OUR SINS, AND NOT FOR OURS ONLY, BUT ALSO FOR THE SINS OF THE WHOLE WORLD." Notice now—

3. The TWOFOLD RESULT: "*The sheep shall be scattered,*" and "*I will turn my hand (or turn back my hand) upon the little ones.*" As to the former, we have our Lord's own application of the words:—"Then said Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad:"‡ and the intimation was verified—"But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."§ "Comparing," says Dr. Henderson, "the present verse with the fourth and seventh verses of the eleventh chapter, and especially with what is predicted in the two following verses of the present chapter, in which the same subject is continued, it is evident *the sheep* or *flock* cannot be restricted to the disciples of Christ. The circumstances, however, in reference to which our Saviour appropriated the prophecy, afforded a striking type of the dispersion of the Jewish people, which is that intended by Zechariah." I will not absolutely deny the justness of this; yet I confess

* Psa. xl. 7, 8.

† Heb. x. 10.

‡ Matt. xxvi. 31.

§ Matt. xxvi. 56.

myself very doubtful about it. Not that there is any question as to God's ancient people being, on various occasions, in the Old Testament, called God's "flock," and "the sheep of his pasture." My doubts are not about that. But observe, if the dispersion of Israel—the same dispersion with that in the subsequent verse—be meant in this verse, it must follow that the "scattering" of Christ's disciples from him during his last sufferings *was no part, properly, of its fulfilment*, but that the terms of the prophecy were merely *accommodated* by our Lord to that fact, which thus became a "*type*," or *similitude* (and but a very remote and general one surely) of the dispersion which was actually meant. Now, we are naturally led by our Lord's language to understand him as meaning that the "scattering" from him of his adherents and *friends*,—which formed a part, and to a spirit of sensibility like his not a trifling one, of his sufferings,—was really included in the prediction:—but the scattering of his *friends* could not properly be included in a prophecy of the subsequent dispersion of his *enemies*. Then further, these unbelieving Jews, who were subsequently to be scattered, had been expressly told by Jesus that they were *not* of his sheep.* It does not, therefore, seem likely that the prophetic language should be equally applicable to those who *were* his sheep, and to those who, according to his own testimony, *were not*. I do think it, on these accounts, more probable that the words in this verse have the immediate reference which Jesus gives them; being one of those minute circumstances, in the predictions before referred to, of the sufferings of the Messiah, on which so much of the force of the argument in support of Christianity from prophecy depends; while the verse which follows relates to the dispersion of the mass of the unbelieving Jewish nation—an act of judicial vengeance on account of their unbelief and rebellion "against the Lord, and against his Anointed."

The *second* of the two results is—"And I will turn (or turn back) my hand upon the little ones." Here, as every-

* John x. 26.

where, "*the little ones*" is a designation of *tender affection*. Various passages might be quoted in proof. Let one from Christ's own lips suffice:—"But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."* So, when Jesus appeared to his disciples after his rising from the dead, he accosted them by the compellation of "children"—or "little children." It is, then, beyond question, the language of *love* and *kindness*—not that, as some have imagined, of threatening and judicial severity. The hand is the hand of a Father; these "little ones" being the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus: and it is "*turned*," or turned back, "*upon them*," for gracious care and protection. It is not the hand, armed with the avenging sword of justice. That sword had smitten its victim. The justice of God was, by the smiting of that victim, fully satisfied. The sword, in regard to these "little ones" who believed, and were "accepted in the Beloved," therefore, was returned to its scabbard. It "rested and was still." It could not turn from *Him* upon *them*. The smiting of *Him*, set *them* free from its avenging stroke. The uplifted hand that smote to death the Shepherd, laid aside the sword, and was turned in mercy, to come between "the little ones" and all danger. They might be scattered for the time, but not lost. He would "turn his hand" to gather, to bless, to shield, to save them.† The general sentiment in the words before us,

* Matt. xviii. 6, 10, 14.

† That the phrase—"turning the hand upon" a person or a people is used *for good*—we have instances in Isa. i. 25 and Isa. xi. 11. Hengstenberg takes the same view; also Henderson. Dathe has "*curam ego quam istorum parvulorum.*" Schulz, "*curam habebo,*" &c.—Ed.

then, is—that it is for the sake of Jehovah's "Shepherd, and the man that is his Fellow," when smitten on account of their sins by the sword of God's justice, that believing sinners become the objects of divine favour,—that the light of God's countenance is lifted up upon them,—that the hand of God's love and power is "turned upon them" to keep and to bless them, to bestow good, and to avert evil. And mark the fact in regard to the believers of that day. How fared it with them? God took care of them. They rallied. They met and kept together. God preserved them from their enemies. They saw together—"the twelve"—and "the five hundred brethren" on the mountain in Galilee, the joyful sight of their risen Master. The hundred and twenty disciples at Jerusalem continued under the protection of the same divine hand. They received, in due course, the promised blessing from on high. Their number increased: the Lord "giving testimony to the word of his grace," and adding to them new "vessels of mercy,"—new children to His family—"little ones," to partake of the same care and the same blessing. We might, without any straining, include in the general promise "I will turn my hand upon the little ones," all the fulness of blessing that lies in Jehovah's favour.

4. We have still to notice the SPIRIT OF THE INVOCATION—THE DIVINE MIND AS EXPRESSED IN IT.

Jehovah speaks:—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, *saith the LORD of hosts.*" Was Jehovah *displeased* with his shepherd—with the man that was his fellow? Was it for any thing in himself, provoking holy indignation, that the sword of justice is summoned from its scabbard against him? There are certain "shepherds" spoken of in ancient days, and in prophecy too,—whose selfish neglect of the flock committed to them stirred Jehovah's wrath, and to whom He says—"Therefore behold I am against the shepherds, and will require my flock at their hand;" and He threatens to "feed them with judgment." Was there aught in the character or in the doings of *this* Shepherd, that thus awoke

his displeasure, and turned his eye to the hilt of his glittering sword? Was there a frown upon his countenance towards "the man his fellow," when He uttered the prophetic words, calling on that sword to "awake" and to "smite" him? O how far from that! The "shepherd"—the "man his fellow" was the object of everlasting and unchanging love. And never was that love in more intense exercise towards him than at the very moment when the sword of justice smote him to death. That was the very moment of his highest and holiest service,—the moment of the crowning act of his obedience. It was "obedience unto death:"—"I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do!" Never did the Father look upon him with such delighted complacency and fulness of approval as then: yes—at the very moment (mysterious as it is and ever must be to us) when He was "making his soul an offering for sin!" "bruising him and putting him to grief!"

What, then, may the invocation of the avenging sword be considered, in regard to God, as expressing? May we venture to say—a kind of *divine exultation* in the prospect which the words so animatedly anticipate? The time to which the text looks forward is the central point in the history of man: nay, if an expression so self-contradictory may be allowed, it is a kind of central point in eternity; for it was looked forward to *from* everlasting, and it will be looked back upon *to* everlasting. When Jesus was on earth, he said, in anticipating the closing scene of his life—"I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Thus, for the sake of the great ends which by his sufferings and death were to be accomplished—

"He longed to be baptized with blood,
Panted to reach the Cross!"

Is there any longing analogous to this in the text? Jehovah anticipates the time when that scheme—the device of His own infinite wisdom—which had been in His mind from

eternity, was to be consummated; anticipates the incarnation, and sufferings and death of the eternal Word,—the completing of that work in which wondering angels were to see “The manifold wisdom of God” in light surpassing, by infinite degrees, any in which they ever had seen it before; which was to open the way for the free and honourable exercise to our fallen race of the mercy in which He delights; which was to set Him forth to the admiring and adoring universe as “the just God and the Saviour;” more than reconciling the pleadings of benevolence with the inviolable claims of righteousness; making each contribute, without parting with one ray of its own glory, to the augmented glory of the other; thus “magnifying the law, and making it honourable,” even in the very act of saving the guilty from its fearful but equitable sanction,—and effecting, in the utmost possible degree, that which is the great end of creation and providence, as well as of redemption—“Glory to God in the highest!” There was no delight in anticipating the dread agonies of that hour of expiation, when the sword of His justice was to obey the summons, and smite His chosen One—“the beloved, in whom his soul was well-pleased.” But “the glory was to follow.” Love to the “Shepherd”—“the man his Fellow”—made him delight in the anticipation of “crowning him with glory and honour,”—“of making him exceeding glad with his countenance,”—“of highly exalting him, and giving him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess to God.”—The language of our text, then, is the language of Jehovah’s JUSTICE, demanding the satisfaction necessary to men’s salvation: the language of Jehovah’s MERCY, delighting in the anticipation of that salvation: the language of Him who is both LIGHT and LOVE, exulting in the perfect union of these attributes, and the equal honour of both in the free bestowal of the blessings of that salvation, —“turning his hand upon the little ones,” to “guide them by his counsel,” and shield them by his power, and cheer them by his smile, and then to “receive them to glory.”

We take the four verses which follow together. Whether they were uttered by the Prophet at the same time, in the same prediction, I will not presume to determine: but they relate to the same events. And these events are manifestly divine dispensations, at once of *judicial severity*, and of *sparing mercy*.

With regard to *the former*—the execution of divine judgments—judgments evidently connected with, and arising out of the part acted by those on whom these judgments are inflicted in the smiting of the Shepherd; who, though he was “delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” was yet “by *wicked hands* crucified and slain:”—these judgments are first stated in regard to “*the land*,” and then, more particularly, in regard to “*the city*”—to “*Jerusalem*.” “It shall come to pass, that in all the land two-thirds shall be cut off and die:”—“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”* I need hardly say, that neither the *two-thirds* in regard to the inhabitants of *the land*, nor the *half* in regard to the population of *the city*, is to be interpreted with literal exactness. All that is to be understood is, that there was to be a fearfully extensive slaughter, captivity, and desolation. When expounding the former part of the *eleventh* chapter, we had occasion to mention something of the fearfulness of the vengeance which then alighted on the Jewish people; showing the words of Jesus to have been no more than simple truth—“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be.”† We do not therefore enlarge upon the subject now. The particulars here noted are such as usually—it might be said invariably—attend the besieging, the capture, and the sacking of cities; especially when, as in this case, the assailing

* Chap. xiii. 8; and chap. xiv. 1, 2.

† Matt. xxiv. 21.

army has been exasperated by a long, harassing, and wasting defence. The entrance of the infuriated soldiery, the rifling of houses, the violation of women, the indiscriminate massacre, and the division of the spoil, are just what all expect, and what require no comment. And never were such scenes more frightfully realized, than at the destruction of Jerusalem; when God in his providence, in judicial retribution, “gathered all nations against the devoted city to battle:” “*all nations*”—a correct description of the army of Titus; the Empire of Rome embracing a large proportion of the then known world, and this army consisting of soldiers of all the different nations which composed it. And, while such was to be the destruction brought upon the “city,” the desolation was to extend, and that, in different ways, at short intervals, throughout “the land.” It was to be, instrumentally, the doing of the Romans. And profane historians record their plans, their tactics, their exploits, their successes; and look no higher. But such is not the style of the Bible. It exhibits men as “God’s hand.” All is God’s doing. He predicts it. He fulfils it. It is by Him “the nations are gathered together against the city.” They execute His righteous sentence; and then, since they “mean not so, neither do their hearts think so,” but their only object is self-aggrandizement and the extension of their own power and dominion,—they must be punished in their turn.

But we noticed, that there is *sparing mercy*, as well as judicial severity. Of “the land” it is said—“*a third shall be left therein:*” and of “Jerusalem”—“*the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*” A large remnant should be spared. It is not meant that they should continue to inhabit Jerusalem; for Jerusalem, according to other predictions, was to be “laid even with the ground,” and torn up with the ploughshare; but that they should escape the fate of those who are slain or carried into captivity.

What, then, was to become of this spared portion of the people? We are told in the ninth verse of the thirteenth chapter—“I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as

gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God."

I am satisfied, on mature consideration, that these words refer, not to the Christian converts—of whom we shall have to speak in the verses which follow, in which *their* preservation is specially referred to,—but to God's dealings with the remainder of the Jewish people after the fearfully calamitous period of which we have been speaking; and to the intended and ultimate result. The language points to the dispersions, and varied fortunes and sufferings of that people among all the nations whither they should be driven; to the design of God by these punitive dealings, to bring them, in the end, to a change of character, and restore them to their privileges, and re-establish them in His favour. This is represented by a figure, not unfrequently used in Scripture—the process of purifying metals by subjecting them to the melting heat of the furnace. In the present instance, the process has been long and slow. But, here as elsewhere, we are assured of the issue. The time will come when the prediction before us shall be fully verified. In receiving the Gospel, they will "receive the reconciliation." It will then appear how they have, all along, been "beloved for the fathers' sakes." They have, for many centuries, appeared as if God had cast them off. But no. He is only bringing them through the furnace. And when, "accepting the punishment of their iniquity," and "humbling themselves under his mighty hand," they shall turn to the God of their fathers, and, in faith and penitence, "call on his name,"—He will turn to them in covenant grace, "lift upon them anew the light of his countenance,"—say with compassionate and complacent delight, as in days of old, "IT IS MY PEOPLE." And they—renouncing their unbelief and rebellion,—bowing to the sceptre of the true Messiah, as King of Israel, and Saviour of the world,—accepting the mercy offered in His name, and exulting in their own Jehovah's returning favour,—shall say, with equal humility, gratitude, and joy of heart, "JEHOVAH IS MY GOD!" Hasten, Lord, the happy time!

The *first* lesson from this subject, we shall read to you in the words of inspiration. PAUL shall be the preacher:—“If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”*

2. How rich in consolation is this passage to all Jehovah's children—His “*little ones*”—the objects of His saving grace and fatherly love! The sword of punitive justice having smitten the divine Surety, is, with regard to all who believe in Him, and look for mercy through his atonement,—put up into its scabbard. It “rests and is still.” Never

* Rom. xi. 17—29.

can it awake to smite *them*. Jehovah is propitious to them. The smile of His love is towards them. The eye of His care, and the hand and arm of His power, are pledged for their present and final security: so that they may boldly say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Does God afflict them? He does. What a comfort to know, that it is not as a judge, but as a father; that the wounds He inflicts are not inflicted by the sword of punitive justice, but with the rod of fatherly love? The very hand that inflicts the stroke is, at the same instant, turned to you in mercy, and offered for your support and strength.

3. In the awaking of the sword of divine justice, and the smiting of "the man who was the fellow of the LORD of hosts," we read a deeply impressive lesson of the "exceeding sinfulness of sin;" the unutterable amount of its demerit; and the impossibility of its passing unpunished—passing without the stigma being impressed upon it, in the eyes of the moral universe, of God's infinite abhorrence. In one or other of two ways must sin, under the divine government, be visited with its desert;—either in the person of the sinner himself, or in the person of the divinely appointed and divine Mediator. It is by faith in that Mediator as the Equal of Jehovah, and as smitten to death by the sword of divine justice, to make propitiation for the guilt of a condemned and perishing world,—that any sinner can be freed from the stroke of that sword *in his own person*. If the blood of the Surety be despised,—if the "great salvation be neglected,"—if when, in the name of him who has "made atonement for sin by the blood of his cross"—Jehovah extends to the guilty the sceptre of His grace, any sinner, under the power of pride, or the love of sin and of the world, refuses to approach, to touch it, and to live; against that sinner, the same sword of divine justice must, in the end, "awake," and smite him with the second death. HE HAS REFUSED THE SMITTEN SUBSTITUTE; HE MUST BEAR THE STROKE HIMSELF.

LECTURE XXIII.

ZECH. XIV. 3—9.

“Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.”

THE “nations” against which Jehovah is, in the first of these verses, represented as “going forth and fighting” are, as we saw in last Lecture, the nations which were to besiege and pillage and destroy Jerusalem; the nations, that is, of which the Roman armies were to be composed,—or, in other words, the Empire of Rome. These nations were to be Jehovah’s instruments, effecting His long foretold and threatened vengeance against His unbelieving and rebellious people. But they were not, on that account, the less guilty, in the principles by which they were actuated, and the deeds of unrighteousness, rapacity, cruelty, and murder, which, to so frightful an extent, they perpetrated.

The Bible lets us into some principles of the divine government, which we could not otherwise have discovered; and which, when discovered, it is not for us to venture to apply, in exposition of its measures, further than God has been pleased to make the application himself. He sometimes represents himself as *rewarding* such services in accomplishing, though undesignedly, the purposes of His providence, when it has required the expenditure of a large amount of toil, and peril, and suffering, and life, by granting otherwise further successes and acquisitions. Look, for example, to the language by the prophet Ezekiel:—"Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it: therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon: and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the Lord God."* At other times, and more frequently, He appears as avenging himself on the instruments of His judicial inflictions, by visiting them, in their turn, with judgments; and, after having, by their instrumentality, chastised a guilty nation, stirring up other nations to chastise them:—"O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few."† Then, after describing the vain-glorious boastings of the Assyrian monarch, who, in his desolating career, "neither feared God, nor regarded man," but worshipped and gratified self alone,

* Ezek. xxix. 18—20.

† Isa. x. 5—7.

He adds—"Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks. Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; and shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them." *

Thus it should be, on the occasion before us, with the ROMANS. They had, through divine sufferance, been the conquerors and lords of the world. But notwithstanding their might and their haughty pride, there was One who was above them; even He to whom they owed that might, and to whom they were amenable for the use of it. They had executed His will against Jerusalem. But it might be said to be their last conquest. They were never to prosper more. The decline of Rome might be dated from the fall of Jerusalem. Soon it began to sink. And by the successive irruptions of the barbarous tribes of the north, its glory was extinguished, and its fall hastened. And these invaders were just God's instruments, to scourge the Romans, as the Romans had been to scourge the Jews. Men might not discern the hand of His retributive justice, avenging, by such events, the wrongs of His people; wrongs on the part of their invaders and plunderers, though, as inflicted by the hand of Jehovah, more than merited. But such retribution there was. All the calamities that befel them, were God's "*fighting against them*;" and this was just a following out of the same principle, of which the operation had been many a time exemplified in the former history of the Jewish people: "*as when he fought in the day of battle*." The

* Isa. x. 12, 16-19.

reference is not to any particular battle; but to the various occasions on which He interposed for them; showing, in "the lighting down of his arm," how He was *for them* and *against* their *adversaries*: Himself retaliating upon those adversaries the injuries done by them. The words were fitted to recall the various instances of signal interposition and retribution, recorded in the inspired annals of ancient days.

This allusion to events that were to succeed the destruction of Jerusalem, and the calamities to be inflicted on the Jewish nation, and which were to affect, retributively, the nations by whom they were to be inflicted, is introduced by the way; and the Prophet returns to the case of Jerusalem:—verses 4, 5. "And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." These verses, and those which follow, are involved in no little obscurity. Waiving, as much as possible, all critical discussion, we shall endeavour to give what seems to be their most natural meaning.

It is true that "the feet" of Immanuel, during his abode on earth, frequently "stood on the mount of Olives." But we cannot suppose the allusion to any such literal fact, inasmuch as the time to which the words refer was a considerable series of years subsequent to his leaving the world, and ascending to heaven. I have no hesitation in considering Jehovah, in his omnipotence, taking a position on the "mount of Olives," and the rending asunder of that mountain, so as to form a valley, and through that valley a way of escape,—not as a *fact*, but as a *figure*; a striking and sublime figure. Our business, then, must be to find what, as a figure, it is meant to con-

vey. By some it is understood of the removal of the obstructions which lay in the way of the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of God. "The ceremonial law," says Scott, "and the whole Mosaic dispensation, which obstructed the admission of the Gentiles into the church, as the surrounding mountains did their entrance into Jerusalem, was removed. The peculiar privileges which Jerusalem had enjoyed (of which the pleasant and fruitful Mount of Olives was an apt emblem) were taken from her, and divided among the nations on every side; and those Jews who believed the word of God fled away from the destruction that was coming on Jerusalem." Now, it is quite true, that the removal of the ceremonial law, and, by that means, the opening of a free entrance for the Gentiles into the Church, is aptly enough represented by the figure now before us—the removal of an obstructing mountain. But the introduction of it here seems forced; and things are brought together between which it is not easy to discern a connexion,—the admission of the Gentiles by the removal of the Jewish Ceremonial, and the escape of the Christians from Jerusalem. I am satisfied, that this last is the true and only reference of the passage. It is an assurance, conveyed under a bold figure, of the intervention of omnipotence for their protection, and their consequent deliverance from danger and destruction.

They had been warned by their Lord of the coming calamities, and charged to provide for their safety by timely flight—"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand :) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened,

there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."* The premonition thus given includes in it the assurance of divine favour and divine care. And they *did* escape. They fled, as the historian Eusebius informs us, to PELLA, a city on the farther side of the Jordan, where they lived in security. Now the Mount of Olives lay in their way from Jerusalem thither; which gives a special appropriateness to the sublime figure of Jehovah taking his stand on the mountain, and by his power cleaving it asunder, to make way for them. They were to be as sure of a safe deliverance, *as if* this had literally been done before them, by Him who, of old, divided the sea before their fathers, "making the waters of the deep a way for the ransomed of the Lord to pass over." He could as literally have cleft the mountains as he cleft the sea. But there is no record, either in history or in the actual state of the mountain, of any such miracle: and, unless, as some think, though we are satisfied, without ground, the whole prediction relates to future time, and is *then* to have its *literal* fulfilment, we are shut up to the figurative interpretation; and must regard it as a lofty poetical image.

Let it not be said their fleeing was unpatriotic and dastardly,—unworthy of good and faithful citizens; who ought to have remained, and aided in their city's defence, and sacrificed their lives in the good cause. No one will speak thus who believes the Bible. The city was doomed,—doomed of God; doomed, in His retributive justice, to destruction. In this view, the cause was *not* good. It was not the cause of God. They were to reserve themselves for a better; for what was now truly *His* cause; for the advancement of the kingdom of which their exalted Lord was now the Head, the kingdom which "is not of this world." The city could be saved by no aid of theirs. No power on earth could rescue it from the vengeance of omnipotent Justice. They were therefore to flee; to flee instantly and in haste, as from pressing peril. This is strongly expressed in

* Matt. xxiv. 15—22.

the latter part of the fifth verse—"Ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee." There is not a word of this earthquake in the Scripture history. The only other allusion to it occurs in the book of Amos, where it is used to settle a date:—"The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake."* It must have been something extraordinary—unusually extensive and awful—when it is thus used to date a period,—and, at the same time, as having occasioned such a flight from the destruction wrought by it, as to render it a suitable comparison for the Prophet here. The *tradition* of it behoved to have been vivid and fearful. The words of the *Prophet* might be interpreted either as intimating a *fact*, or laying on an *injunction*. The words of Jesus himself are decidedly an injunction:—and the authority was paramount by which it was given. Their staying in Jerusalem would have been, not folly merely, but actual *disobedience*. The authority was confirmed by the perfect correspondence of the events already transpiring with the predictions of their Lord. They therefore followed his instructions.

There is ambiguity in the former part of the fifth verse: "for the valley of the mountains *shall reach unto Azal*." Some understand *Azal* not as a proper name, but, from its etymology, as meaning simply *the separate place*,—that is, the place set apart by Jehovah for their safety. By others *Azal* is considered as a proper name; and the name of a place, or suburb, close to one of the gates of the city. The only difficulty here is, that the words "shall reach even unto *Azal*" suggest naturally to most readers the idea of *Azal* being the remotest point *from the city Jerusalem*. But there is another way in which these words may be taken, and not less naturally,—perhaps more so. The point *from*

* Amos i. 1.

which the valley, or opening, made by the severing of the mountain, should be considered as commencing may be, not the city, but the point at which Jehovah takes his stand. He may be conceived of as from that point looking toward the city, and making the cleft to reach *to its very gates*; so that there might be no difficulty in finding *an outlet*;—no embarrassment, no hesitancy, no delay. The danger being immediate, the way of flight from it is thus instantly accessible; at the very point where it was needed.

On the margin, “the valley of *the* mountains” is, more correctly, “the valley of *my* mountains.” They are *all* God’s. “By his strength he setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power.” And these “mountains round about Jerusalem” were specially His, as forming His rampart for the protection of “the city which was called by His name.” But He could make a way *to* the city, for His agents in its overthrow, and a way *from* the city for those who were the objects of His love,—a way of safety as sure as if Olivet had been parted asunder for the purpose.

“*And the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.*” This is no uncommon mode of expression in Scripture: God being often spoken of as *coming* in any event of providence,—especially any event on which important results depend. It is used elsewhere, as well as here, with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. And those who are here called “*the saints*” are elsewhere designated *the angels*; the term meaning simply “*the holy ones.*” These are ever represented as the ministers of Jehovah’s throne; waiting His orders, for missions of either mercy or judgment, and attending upon Him, when represented after the manner of men as Himself coming, or going, for the execution of His purposes. There is, in the words before us, a sudden and singular change of *the pronoun*, from the *third* to the *second* person:—“The LORD my God shall come, and *all the holy ones with THEE.*” The most natural account of this change is, that the mind of the Prophet, having spoken of Jehovah’s coming, naturally rises to JEHOVAH HIMSELF. For it seems manifest, that in the words

“*with thee*” the person addressed is Jehovah. There is something specially natural in this, when the preceding terms of *appropriation* are considered—“Jehovah, *my God*, shall come.” Having spoken of him thus as *his God*, his heart and his eye are lifted together to His throne.

The differences between the *text* and the *margin* are sufficient to show that there was a felt obscurity in the *sixth* verse; as indeed there still is, both in that and in those which follow. The word rendered *clear* is on the margin *precious*; and is moreover in the plural number:—that rendered *dark* is there *thickness*:—and the *nor* is supplementary. It is not surprising, then, that different translators have given different renderings.* On these I thought of offering some remarks: but I shall rather dispense with them; and, taking our received version as, substantially, though not, it may be, perfectly, giving the sense, shall endeavour to bring it out by the illustration of a few consecutive observations. We have here, then—

1. A period of *mingled light and darkness*. It is not the clearness of an unclouded day; neither is it the darkness of a moonless and starless night. It is something between both; or a combination of both,—darkness here and light there. And is not this a just representation of a long period in the history of the Christian church and of the world, subsequent to the events just mentioned—the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish people?—It is true that Jesus speaks of himself as “the Light of the world.” It is true that John says, “The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” It is true, that the dispensation which had then been introduced was, in comparison with that which had preceded it, an age of light. But still, even before the time of which we have been speaking, the clear light of truth had begun to be obscured by the introduction of many heresies. And so, to a great and growing extent, it continued; and continues to this hour. What has character-

* For these the reader is referred to Hengstenberg and Henderson on the passage.—ED.

ised all the past centuries of the Christian era more strikingly, than light struggling with darkness?—the darkness sometimes more and sometimes less dense:—the light at times apparently in danger of entire extinction; and then brightening anew, and extending its rays further into the surrounding gloom? And while such has been the case within the Church itself, the same may be said of the world at large, considered as inclusive of the people of God. What has there been—what is there now—but light struggling with darkness,—the light of “the glorious gospel of the blessed God” struggling with the darkness of widely extended idolatry and superstition? Still, both as to the Church and as to the world, the description answers—“the light is neither clear, nor yet dark.” It shines: but “it shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.” But still—

2. It is “*one day*”—a *continuous* day; never, that is, giving way to absolute night, or unmingled darkness; but varying in the amount of brightness and of shade, respectively;—sometimes the darkness threatening to have the mastery; yet the day never declining into total night—“But it shall be one day—not day, nor night.” How strikingly verified! Even in what have, too truly, been called “the dark ages,” there was day; it was not *all night*. And then, what an increase of the day-light at the Reformation! Yet, *it was not all day*. There was still darkness; and not a little of it, even within the Church. And that darkness can hardly be said, in our own time, to be diminishing. In some quarters, it is sadly thickening. Nor has the light that shines *in* the Church as yet shone to such an extent or with such effect, *from* the Church as to dispel the darkness of heathen and Mahometan superstition and delusion. It is still “*one day*,” but a day appropriately described as “*not day nor night*,” a peculiar day, neither entirely the one, nor entirely the other. We have *now*, perhaps, more than ever of clear light; and yet more than for centuries of growing heresy and strange superstition along with it. Observe—

3. This day is “*known to the Lord*,” the Lord, that is,

has not seen meet to reveal it clearly and fully,—as to its precise duration. He had not intimated this to Zechariah. That it was not the purpose of God that this should be distinctly known, till it should come to be made manifest by the event, is sufficiently clear from the simple fact of the variety of interpretations which, even by critics, expositors, and calculators of eminence, have been put upon such prophetic notices as are actually given; so many of which have, in their turns, been proved fallacious by the time fixed passing by without any symptoms of the confidently expected event. We have a comment, indeed, upon the words before us from the lips of our divine Master himself. When the disciples put the question after His resurrection—"Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" His reply was—"It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."* Such was the case with the ancient Prophets themselves, when predicting the events of "the fulness of the time:"—"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."† The meaning seems to be that they came to know that these events were not to be *in their own day*, but were in reserve for a future generation. And thus it is with regard to Christ's *second coming*; though the words I am about to quote are by some understood to refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, the subject of the earlier portion of our Lord's address—"But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."‡ He who "knoweth the end from the beginning"

* Acts i. 6, 7.

† 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

‡ Matt xxiv. 36.

has "determined the times before appointed;" and in the unfoldings of His providential administration, will bring about His own ends in His own times; when the precise correspondence of the prophetic and the real seasons will be made fully apparent. Let us bear in mind the counsel given to Daniel when solicitous for further information, he exclaimed, "O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"—"Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end," . . . "Go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days."*

4. Observe what is to happen towards the close of this long day:—"But it shall come to pass, that *at evening-time it shall be light.*" Evening-time is the season of twilight,—of sinking light, and approaching darkness. But it shall not be so in regard to this day. When it draws toward the end of the predicted period, instead of the light becoming still obscurer, it will suddenly brighten; spread with speed; and prevail over the darkness:—instead of declining to the darkness of night, the day shall suddenly turn, and the light of "the Sun of righteousness" shine more clearly and extensively. The light of truth shall take the place of the darkness of ignorance, superstition, and error; and everywhere men shall appear "walking in the light of the Lord." The season is that so frequently predicted and promised, when toward the close of the day of the world's duration,—the day of mingled light and darkness, "the light of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the seas;" when "all shall know Him from the least to the greatest;" when this light of knowledge shall produce, wherever it comes, the light of holiness, of moral and spiritual purity; and when the blended light of knowledge and holiness shall bring with it the light of universal joy. And, as the "evening-time" is the time of stillness, and peacefulness, and repose, the coming season shall be the time of

* Dan. xii. 8, 9, 13.

the cessation of all disquietude and turbulence and strife,—the season of harmony, tranquillity, and rest.

5. We have next, though under a different figure, the influence of the converted seed of Abraham, when restored to their city and land, in hastening forward this happy time:—verse 8. “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.” Some indeed consider these words as referring to the *first* flowing forth of the streams of gospel truth and gospel blessing from Jerusalem, after our Lord’s ascension. But the connexion—the position in which the words stand—induce me to prefer the other interpretation. “Living waters” is a Hebraism for springing and running water.* It is a common emblem for divine truth, and the blessings which accompany its diffusion. And a beautiful emblem it is. What would our world be without water? Take it away; and the fair face of nature is stripped of its varied loveliness, and becomes a scene of universal sterility. Every form of animal and vegetable life becomes extinct. All is desolation and death. Thus it is in the spiritual world. But for the “living waters” of divine truth, all is barrenness,—moral waste—spiritual death. It is where the “living waters” flow, that the scenes of prophetic poetry are realized. All lives. “The mountains and the hills break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field clap their hands: instead of the thorn comes up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar the myrtle-tree.”† These “living waters” are *then*, as in “the beginning of the Gospel,” to “*go forth from Jerusalem.*” Nothing can be more natural, than that the Jewish people, when converted and restored,—while mourning for their unbelief and rebellion against “Jehovah and his Anointed,” should be anxious to redeem the past; should become zealous for the diffusion of that truth which they had so long rejected; should thus

* Thus, in Gen. xxvi. 19. “a well of springing water” is on the margin *living waters*.

† Isa. lv. 12, 13.

become active missionaries of the Cross; and that the evidence which their own history, and the fulfilment of prophecy supplied by their long dispersion and their final ingathering, afford of the divine origin of the Gospel, should render them, by the aids of the Divine Spirit, specially successful. And mark *two things* in what is here said of the forth-going of these waters:—First, they “go forth” in every direction; “half toward the former (or Eastern) sea, and half toward the hinder (or Western) sea:” that is, the *Dead Sea*, and the *Mediterranean Sea*;—designated as they are here “the former and the hinder sea,” because an inhabitant of Jerusalem, looking eastward, has the Dead Sea *before* him, and the Mediterranean *behind* him. The general meaning seems to be, that the waters should flow forth *in all directions*. Then secondly, observe, the *persevering constancy* of their diffusion of saving knowledge:—“In summer and in winter it shall be.” All the year round, the healing and fructifying streams shall make their way. The heats of summer shall not dry them; nor shall the frosts of winter bind and arrest them. They shall flow forth freely at all seasons, carrying spiritual fertility and verdure to every quarter,—turning “the desolate heritages of the Gentile world,” into “the garden of the Lord.” We have then—

6. *The final issue*:—“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.” In one sense, it was never otherwise. Jehovah has been, since the world’s creation, “King over all the earth.” It has ever been under His control. But in this verse there is included in the idea of kingly power that of *willing subjection*. He shall then be the universally acknowledged King. The world is a world of rebels; of apostates from God, in His rightful authority and His exclusive worship. Then “all the ends of the world shall remember, and turn unto the LORD.” “All nations shall serve Him.” The divine Redeemer, who now reigns “at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” shall sway His sceptre over a world of willing and happy subjects. And “the idols shall be utterly

abolished.” The “gods many and lords many” of heathen worship shall all be disowned; “cast to the moles and the bats,”—the apt emblems of the blindness that has worshipped them. “There shall be ONE JEHOVAH”—“AND HIS NAME ONE.” *

In conclusion:—

1. Although we have recognized a principle of the divine administration,—a principle applicable to both nations and individuals,—namely, the principle of *judicial retribution*;—it is necessary for us to take along with this recognition the lesson of caution in regard to its application. Amidst the complication of events, and their mutual dependencies, in divine providence, and their frequently remote and mingled operation on the condition of both persons and peoples, such application is quite beyond our limited faculties; subject too, as those faculties are, to an endless variety of biassing influences. There are some persons who are by much too fond of finding, in every calamity, a special judgment; of connecting particular visitations with particular sins. Now, there may be, and there unquestionably are, cases in which God is pleased so manifestly to connect the two, that not to see and not to own it, would be impiety. But such cases are comparatively rare. What we find fault with is, the presumptuous rashness of those who, pretending to superior sagacity, see connexions, as if they had a divinely imparted intuition, such as other minds, in their vain conceit less discerning, but really only more modest and self-diffident, cannot discover; and by whom every calamity is a judgment, which they are never at any loss to trace to some special sin of which it is the judicial consequence. This is a species of casuistry, in which it is

* This language has been hypercritically found fault with; as if it implied that previously there had been more Jehovahs than one; and the translation has been substituted—“In that day, Jehovah shall be alone, and his name alone.” Did ever a reader of our English translation imagine it meant anything else than this? I rather prefer it; because there seems to be an intended allusion to the terms of the Mosaic constitution of doctrine and worship; in which the unity of Jehovah, as the one and only God, was the primary article, Deut. vi. 4—“Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah;” rendered by some—“Jehovah is our God; Jehovah is one.”

very hazardous to deal. Our divine Master expressly warns us against it:—"There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answering, said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?"* Let us deal cautiously in judging others; and in judging ourselves, instead of trying to find out any one sin for which we are "chastened of the LORD," seek to have *all* our evil propensities together crucified in us, and "the body of sin destroyed."

2. Let us be more deeply impressed with the duty of "having faith in God;"—such faith as will enable us, whenever the path of duty is clear before us, to trust Him, and go forward. When duty is imperative, we must not conjure up "lions in the way," and shrink from action. Difficulties are not to be regarded where divine orders are explicit. He can cleave the mountain and the flood before an obeying and trusting people. When the Israelites were hemmed in by the mountains on either side of them, the Egyptian hosts behind them, and the impassable sea before them, what were they to do? The divine order was, "Speak unto the people that they *go forward*." This, therefore, became their duty,—committing themselves to God,—that God who, by "a strong hand and stretched-out arm," had rescued them from the cruel bondage of Egypt. They went forward; the sea parted before them, and they "went through the flood on foot,"—the waters being a "wall to them on their right hand and on their left." And so, the command of their Lord made it the duty of the Christian Jews to flee from the impending overthrow of Jerusalem. He who gave the order made the way; providing for their safe escape as wonderfully and effectually as if he had cleft mountains into

* Luke xiii. 1—4.

valleys to open their path. Thus, when God calls, let us not linger. Let no fear detain us. Let us "GO FORWARD," and look to Him to clear our way, and to be our guide and protector. He has promised—"I will bring the blind by a way that they know not, and in paths that they have not known: I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them, and not forsake them."

3. Our present state, individually, bears resemblance to the condition, as here described, of the Church and the world. It is a state of mingled light and darkness; and that, both as it respects knowledge, and as it respects happiness. We know in part; we enjoy in part. It is not all light with us, nor is it all darkness. There is much ignorance mingled with our knowledge, and much suffering and sadness with our joy. Let it be our desire and prayer, that "at evening-time it may be light:" that when the day of life draws to its close, the Saviour may "manifest himself to us as he doth not unto the world;" that our vision may be clear, and the objects of faith and hope brightly apparent;—that the evening-time may thus be the opening of day,—of that "blessed day which knows no morrow,"—the "one day" of eternity,—the cloudless and undeclining day of that world, where we shall see, not "through a glass darkly, but face to face;"—where we shall "know," not "in part," but "even as we are known"—that blessed world

" Where faith is sweetly lost in sight,
And hope in full supreme delight,
And everlasting love!"

4. How delightful to *piety* and to *benevolence* to have the divine assurance of a period of LIGHT awaiting the Church and the world!—the light of knowledge, and purity, and felicity, triumphing over, and chasing fully away the darkness of ignorance, unholiness, and misery! The glory of God is dear to piety; the happiness of men is dear to benevolence. Amidst all that may be strange and perplexing in the present position and aspects of the Church, amidst the partially cheer-

ing and the partially disheartening and alarming, let us still be looking onwards to the coming day,—when, amid the gathering shadows of the evening, “the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS” shall shine forth in unclouded splendour;—when “the light of *that* Sun shall be as the light of seven days.” And, having drunk of the “living waters” ourselves, and experienced their life-giving virtue, let us seek, by every means in our power, to send them forth in all directions, for the revival of the Church at large, and for the healing and life of the nations. When blessed ourselves, it is that we may be a blessing. And while we open channels for these “waters of life” in heathen lands to water “the desolate heritages of the Gentiles,” let us not overlook the sacred duty, of seeking a channel by which we may cause them to return to the land from which they originally flowed; that the people to whom we owe them may share with us in the joy! Meanwhile to you “the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

LECTURE XXIV.

ZECH. XIV. 10—19.

“All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rinnon, south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague. And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

THE representation in the fourth verse of Jehovah taking His stand on the Mount of Olives, cleaving it in the midst, and parting it hither and thither into a valley, we interpreted as a bold figure, expressing the interposition of divine omni-

tence to facilitate and ensure the escape of the followers of Christ among the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the impending destruction of the city. We might have adduced, in confirmation of its figurative character, the occurrence of a similar figure in a previous part of the Book—"Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."* And we now adduce also the first of these verses:—"All the land shall be turned as a plain, from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner-gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's wine-presses." Dr. Henderson renders "*the land*" here as in the verse preceding, *the earth*:—"All the earth shall be changed as it were into the plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem;" and makes the following comment—"These verses intimate that every obstruction shall be removed which prevents the free and full flow of the 'living waters' throughout the world. What is high shall be levelled, and what is low shall be elevated. This idea was suggested by the natural impossibility of water flowing in a westerly direction from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean, owing to the hilly country which intervenes." The close connexion of the representation with the flowing forth of the "living waters" from Jerusalem, imparts more than a merely plausible ingenuity to this explanation. It is probably the true one. The interpretation of Scott seems less natural:—"About the same time such a change will be made in the condition, disposition, and character of the Jews, as great as if a large district should be entirely levelled to a plain; the mountains being cast down, and the valleys filled up. Every outward or inward obstruction to their conversion and restoration to their own land, will be effectually removed." This *may* be the meaning; but I prefer the former. "Geba" was a town in the northern, and "Rimmon," not the rock Rimmon near to Michmash, but a town of the tribe of Simeon, in the southern district of Palestine.

The expression—"it shall be lifted up," seems as if it referred to the plain. But this cannot be. The antecedent is *Jerusalem*. The idea is that the city shall be *exalted*; raised, that is, by Jehovah in distinction and honour. Then follows another very explicit assurance of its being again inhabited. We shall enter on no attempt to settle the precise localities of the different gates and parts of the city here named,—respecting which there is not a little difficulty;—the entire overthrow of the city having necessarily, for many a day, obliterated all traces of them, such as might have fixed their relative positions. It is a matter of no moment. Let a single remark suffice—that the very minuteness of the specification of the different points in the circuit of the city renders it the less likely that the language is to be interpreted altogether *spiritually*. It is indeed no easy matter to imagine that such expressions as that in the close of chapter twelfth:—"Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem;" and the no less—perhaps I might say the *still more*, pointed terms of the two verses now before us, should be interpreted as meaning that Jerusalem should not be inhabited *at all*; or that it should not be inhabited *by its own appropriate people*—the seed of Abraham. The words here contain not only a promise of its being inhabited, and of its being inhabited in security and in peace, but of its *permanence* from that time:—"there shall be no more utter destruction." It had been desolated at the time of the Babylonish captivity; and still more thoroughly desolated by the assault of the arms of Rome, when "the wrath came upon it to the uttermost." When rebuilt and re-peopled in the latter days, it shall never be overthrown again; but shall be "safely inhabited." And that this language is to be understood *literally*, might be further argued from the circumstance that what is said in the opening verses of the chapter respecting the *siege*, and *capture*, and *destruction of Jerusalem*, is so understood by *all*. Surely nothing can well be more unnatural and arbitrary than the interpretation of the one as meaning just what the words express, and of the other as meaning nothing of the kind, but

only the spiritual conversion of *the people*, without any reference to the occupation of *the city*! If the prediction of the city's capture and desolation was fulfilled by the actual coming to pass of the events, the prediction of its restoration and reoccupancy will be fulfilled in like manner, by its being actually regained and repeopled.

To enter with minuteness into the precise import of the terms of unfulfilled prophecy, and still more to affirm such precise import with a confident dogmatism, would be unwarrantable presumption; and it would, moreover, be inconsistent with the very principle on which prophetic phraseology is constructed, and to which we have had already occasion to refer;—the principle, namely, of leaving such a degree of uncertainty and ambiguity in it as may prevent collusion on the one hand for the fulfilment of the prediction, and combination on the other for its hindrance and failure; while, at the same time, such a measure of clearness remains as is sufficient to awaken and keep alive expectation, and to render the accomplishment manifest when it does happen. The remark requires to be specially kept in mind, in regard to such portions of the prophetic writings as that which immediately follows:—“And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.”

It must first of all be observed, that the “*fighting against*

Jerusalem” here mentioned, is not at all the same fighting as that spoken of in the beginning of the chapter. The results of each, it will be at once apparent, are not only different, but opposite. In the one case, the enemies of Judah and Jerusalem triumph; and the city is destroyed, and the people scattered, like “the chaff of the thrashing-floor;” while in the other, the people that were before discomfited become the conquerors,—beat back their enemies, and take possession of their city. The fighting *here* spoken of is that which takes place, to prevent the re-occupation and renewed possession of their city and land by the restored seed of Abraham. It is the same with that described in the twelfth chapter.*

The question instantly suggests itself—Is the description of the plague with which the enemies of the Jews are to be smitten to be understood *literally*?—or does it only signify, under the frightful figure of such a consuming skeleton, their being visited with severe and wasting enfeeblement, pestilence, and death? And the only answer we can give to such questions is—that “*the day will declare it.*” The probability, however, is, that the description is to be understood of such a thorough consumption of all kinds of serviceable power, as shall render every effort imbecile and unavailing; and such a gradual sweeping of their hosts into the grave, as shall make the triumph of those whom they assail easy; all, at the same time, coming in such a way as to make it manifest that it is *the visitation of God*. This view of the matter receives confirmation from the circumstance, that in verse fifteenth the same plague is represented as coming on *man* and *brute* alike—“So shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.” If it shall not be strictly and properly *miraculous*, it shall, at any rate, be so extraordinary as to admit of no doubt of its being a direct divine infliction.

This “plague”—this disabling, wasting, death-dealing con-

* Chap. xii. 1—9.

sumption—is the *first* of the divine visitations here mentioned. We have then another in the thirteenth verse—"It shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour." That is, God would send them, by incidents among themselves which could not fail to produce the effect, and which are always in His power, such confusion of counsels,—such mutual misunderstanding,—such consequent irritations and animosities, as should divide their strength, and set them in hostile conflict against one another; so that confidence should be disappointed and destroyed,—opposition and destruction being experienced where protection and security were expected. This appears to be the import of the latter portion of the verse, "They shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour"—for co-operation and aid; and, instead of finding it, they shall find in that very hand the hand of a foe:—"his hand," instead of being ready for help and protection, "shall be lifted up against the hand of his neighbour."

In such ways will Jehovah, in that coming time, crown the arms of His people, when different nations shall set themselves against them, with easy, and with signal and complete success. It is not exactly a case like that of their fathers at the Red sea, when they were commanded to "stand still and see the deliverance which the Lord was to work;"—when He "fought for them, and they held their peace." In *that* case, they were to do nothing, but simply to "go forward," letting Jehovah fulfil his own word in his own way. *Here* they are to fight; while their God is to fight *for* them, but *with* them and *by* them at the same time. And He is to enrich them with the abundant spoil of their many enemies:—verse 14. "Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance."

It is remarkable how the prophets "at sundry times and in diverse manners" make mention of this hostile opposition to the re-settlement of the Jews in their own city, and the

signal discomfiture and destruction of their enemies, through the manifest interposition of divine power in their behalf. In the thirty-eighth chapter of EZEKIEL, for example, after an allusion to the nations that should take this hostile position against them, Jehovah is represented as thus speaking:—"Son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God, In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company and a mighty army: and thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord God, Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years, that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy, and in the fire of my wrath, have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence; and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations; and they shall know that I am the

LORD.”* Mark here the correspondence of the “throwing down of the mountains, and the falling of the steep places,” and “all the earth being turned up as a plain” in the passage before us;—and of “every man’s sword being against his brother,” with “every man’s hand being lifted up against the hand of his neighbour;”—as well as the grand general correspondence of the gathering of the peoples against Jerusalem, and their divinely effected overthrow.†

We have next the consequence of this, in regard to the nations that have taken part against the Jews, and have been divinely smitten and discomfited. They shall be humbled; their pride cast down; their lofty looks abased. They shall be brought to acknowledge Jehovah, and to take part as friends and allies, in the worship of the people whom they had sought to destroy:—verse 16. “And it shall come to pass, that after every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” Here, had it been merely said—“They shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts,” there would have been comparatively little difficulty. But the additional words, “*and to keep the feast of tabernacles*,” sound so much like a revival of the ancient Jewish ceremonial—and the more especially as “the feast of tabernacles” was partly celebrated by the offering of various sacrifices,—that we are naturally startled. The inquiry forces itself upon us,—and it is one of surprise—“What? are the Jews, when restored, to celebrate their Old Testament festivals? and are Gentiles to unite with them in such celebration?”

Now, from the entire tenor of the New Testament, and from many explicit portions of it, we feel ourselves fully warranted in assuming, as a settled principle, that the ceremonial law, considered as prefiguring the “better things that were to come” at “the fulness of time,” was finally abolished when these “better things” did come; when in the work of Jesus

* Ezek. xxxviii. 14—23.

† See this too in Ezek. xxxix. &c.

and the outpouring of the Spirit, the types found their fulfilment. The moment that Jesus said "It is finished," "bowed his head, and gave up the ghost," and "the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom"—the whole system of typical institutions was virtually abrogated:—"The sacrifice and oblation were made to cease:" there was to be "no more sacrifice for sins." The "meats and drinks, and diverse washings were imposed on them *until* the time of reformation." When that time came, they ceased to have any object, and were set aside. That which was "decaying and waxing old vanished away." To offer animal sacrifices now would be a "returning to the weak and beggarly elements"—to the "nonage" and "bondage" of the Church, and virtually to disown the sacrifice of Immanuel. The New Testament has its own few and simple symbolical rites; but "the types are all withdrawn." Were we to adopt the theory that the Jews were to be restored to Jerusalem *in their unconverted state*, then we could readily conceive that the very first thing they would set about would be, the rebuilding of their temple, and the re-institution of its entire ceremonial. But this theory, on grounds formerly explained, we have rejected. And, when they are regarded as believers in the Messiahship and the *Saviourship* of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the efficacy of His blood, as that of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world,"—to imagine them going back to the rites of the old covenant, erecting their altars, slaying their victims, carrying the blood and the incense before the mercy-seat, and sprinkling the unclean with "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer,"—is, in the extreme, preposterous and contradictory. If by the fact of the high-priest's annual entrance into the Holy of Holies, to offer blood "for himself and for the errors of the people,"—"the Holy Ghost *this* signified, that the way into the Holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing;"—surely the re-institution of that ceremony would amount to denying that "the way into the holiest was made manifest" *even yet*. Such a thing *cannot be*.

Were it really meant, in the passage before us, that the rites of Judaism were to be re-instituted, we should surely have had others of those rites besides "the feast of tabernacles" specified. It alone is mentioned. Let us look at the account we have of it:—"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. These are the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD. Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days. And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month. Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths: that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."* We learn from this, that it was a feast in commemoration of the deliverance of Israel from the bondage and misery of Egypt. Now, at

* Lev. xxiii. 33—43.

the time to which the Prophet looks forward, they were to be the subjects of *another deliverance*,—a deliverance from a divine visitation of still longer continuance and more apparent hopelessness. When they should *then* “keep the feast of tabernacles,” it would be in commemorative celebration of both; the one being added to, or united with, the other, in their grateful adorations. Or, I might say, there being a union of *three* successive deliverances—from Egypt, from Babylon, and from their dispersion among the nations. This will be on the same principle on which the rest of the Sabbath on “the first day of the week” is commemorative of the finished work of *redemption*, along with the finished work of *creation*. And in *such* a celebration there is no difficulty in imagining Gentiles, as fellow-believers in the same God and the same Saviour, uniting with the restored seed of Abraham. The only difficulty arises from the prescribed *sacrifices* which formed a part of the observances connected with this ancient festival. We conceive, however, for the reasons just stated, that “sacrifice and offering” being set aside,—such a festival can be celebrated only in conformity to the principles of the New Dispensation. I heartily go along with the following views of Dr. Henderson;—“It is worthy of notice, that the feast of tabernacles, or of booths, is the only one of all the Jewish festivals which is represented in this prophecy as being observed at the time therein specified. No mention is made of the great day of atonement, the passover, the Pentecost, &c. These have all been superseded by their fulfilment, as types, in the substantial blessings of the Christian Economy. Their re-establishment would be a denial of the reality or efficacy of their antitypes. It may, however, be asked, Why should the feast of tabernacles form an exception? To this it may be replied, first, that such a festival may be observed, without any compromise of the principles of the New Dispensation. Secondly, it may be considered as peculiarly adapted to the retrospections of the converted Jews; who will have to commemorate the sojourn of their fathers, not merely for forty years in the wilderness, but their sojourn for two thousand years in the countries of their dispersion:—

and, thirdly, may serve as a striking memento to them, that though they have been restored to the rest of Canaan, they are still only strangers and pilgrims upon the earth, and that there yet remaineth a rest for the people of God. In this point of view, believing Gentiles, who may go up to the festival, can find no difficulty in celebrating it with them to their mutual edification. That the sacrifices which were offered at that feast, or any other animal sacrifices, will then be renewed, is a position, to maintain which would be to counteract the express design, and contradict the express declarations, of the dispensation of grace." This last sentence amounts to the same thing with what has been already said, that such celebration should be regarded as exclusive of whatever was formerly connected with it, that is incompatible with the spiritual character of the New Testament. If we have clear proof, as I am more than satisfied we have, that the offering now of animal sacrifices would be subversive of the entire scheme of divine institution,—such restriction is no more than the establishment of this renders, not necessary only to suit our interpretation, but manifestly fair and natural.

The representation, it has been observed, is restricted to those peoples that had set themselves against the re-settlement of the Jews in their land and city, and had taken up arms to prevent it. It is not of the Gentiles generally, but of those nations specially, that it is here said they shall go annually to Jerusalem for the purpose mentioned. This conveys the idea, that God will humble and abase them;—making the manifestations given them of His favour for His people effectual in bringing them to own and worship Him—the God of Israel—as the only God, and to acknowledge those whom they had guiltily combined to crush as the objects of His special regard and protecting care.

It is scarcely necessary to say—because it is a manifest impossibility, and no one is likely to imagine it,—that when "*every one that is left* of all the nations that came against Jerusalem," is represented as "going up to keep this feast," it is to be understood as meaning that every individual

inhabitant of those countries is to go up,—the entire population, young and old, male and female, sick and sound, necessarily engaged, or at leisure and at liberty! What is intended evidently is, that by all those peoples there will be such an acknowledgment of Jehovah, and such homage paid Him;—either by commissioned representatives or by numbers of voluntary worshippers assembling at the Holy City, for the purpose of holding communion with the “chosen people,”—honour being put upon them, as, though no longer exclusively, yet still with a special peculiarity,—“beloved for the fathers’ sakes,”—the people of God.

The only thing we can further notice, at present, is the *punishment* of those by whom such acknowledgment of Jehovah, as the God of Israel and the God of the whole earth, is neglected or declined: “It shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.” This, you at once perceive, is a punishment which could be inflicted by no one but God himself. From no other hand than His could it come. It is He alone who “gives rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling men’s hearts with food and gladness.” It is He alone who, in regard to any country, can, in righteous retribution, “command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.” Men may not see and own the hand of God in such visitations. They may impute them to the operation of natural laws,—second causes. But men’s blindness does not change the truth of things. It will still be God’s doing; His doing in righteous retribution, not in sovereignty. “LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see—but they *shall* see, and be ashamed.”

The EGYPTIANS are distinctively introduced, because, of old, the special oppressors and enemies of Israel. *They too* should experience the same plague. Though without rain in their own country, their river, by whose overflowings their country was watered and enriched, was necessarily dependent for its supplies on the rains of *other* countries. The failure of rain in Ethiopia would be to them, in

effect, the same judgment; cutting off the supplies of the Nile. Dr. Henderson, accordingly, and I think correctly, translates thus—(the expression in our version—“who *have* no rain”—short as it is, having two supplements, as appears from the *Italics* and the margin)—“And if the family of Egypt should not go up, nor come, *Upon them also there shall be none*; there shall be upon them the plague with which Jehovah shall plague the nations that will not go up to celebrate the feast of tabernacles.”

In conclusion, observe—

1. *Nothing can prevent the accomplishment of God's purposes.* It is His to say, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do ALL my pleasure.” His language is that of mighty and majestic defiance—“Who will set the briers and the thorns against me in battle? I would go through them: I would burn them up together.” He “maketh the wrath of man to praise him; and the remainder of wrath he restrains.” What may appear obstacles—and obstacles to the eye of man insuperable, He not merely removes, but even, in the mysterious workings of his providence, renders subservient to the accomplishment of his ends. Whether the pathway He needs be for judgment or for mercy, nothing can stand before him. “Every valley is exalted; every mountain and hill are made low: the crooked are made straight, and the rough places plain.” His blessing and His curse reach their destination with equal certainty. He can open a channel with equal ease for the floods of vengeance, or for the “living waters of salvation.” His promises and his threatenings are equally sure. No power in the universe can prevent the gracious fulfilment of the one, or the righteous and fearful execution of the other. Hence—

2. *The enemies of God, and of God's ways and people, shall not be unpunished.* Whether their sins be sins of omission or sins of commission; declining to do what He requires, or doing what He forbids; they shall find it, if they persist in their course, “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” They who arm themselves against the people and the purposes of Jehovah are here pun-

ished: and they who refuse to go up to worship Jehovah are punished. And so, in the parable, they who find excuses for declining the Gospel invitation, and they by whom the servants that bring the invitation are "spitefully entreated and slain," are alike excluded from the blessings of the feast, and are alike exposed to punitive infliction. And if we are shocked even by representations of divine vengeance as those before us, taken from the wasting and sufferings of a decaying and dying body—a living skeleton, consuming away to the grave; how much more fearful are the figures employed to represent the future punishment of "soul and body in hell!" We have no pleasure in dwelling upon them, and trying to harrow up your feelings by attempts at their illustration. But would fain convince you, that they are not *mere* figures;—that there is an awful reality in them;—that the God of truth does not threaten what He will not inflict. If what He threatens is just, it must be as just to execute as it is to threaten it. He can no more threaten what is unjust, or beyond desert, than He can inflict it. In the fearful figures of "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched," there is, be assured, something more than mere words of terror. There is, in the unseen world, something corresponding to the figures, and which the figures are not too strong to express. "Flee from this wrath to come." Hasten your escape. It is here that it must be effected. It is here that the refuge is open. All access to it will be closed, the moment you close your eyes in death. And that moment may be near. Let there be no delay. Fill not your eternity with unavailing regrets. Render not your doom irretrievable. Let not the God of mercy have to say of you any longer—"All the day long have I stretched out my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." His arms are open to receive you. Accept his offered mercy. It is offered in the name of his Son. "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

LECTURE XXV.

ZECH. XIV. 20, 21.

“ In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.”

WE have before assigned our reasons for assuming it, as a settled point, let what difficulties may arise from it in the interpretation of particular expressions,—that the sacrificial and other typical rites of the ceremonial law were virtually abrogated when Christ, their Antitype, “offered up himself,”—thus fulfilling their import and their design, and setting them finally and for ever aside; and that it was by direct revelation abrogated, by the publication of the inspired epistle to the Hebrews, and actually terminated in practice when the temple was destroyed, and thus the means of its continued observance annihilated. There is, at the same time, just as little doubt that, throughout the New Testament spiritual worship is frequently described in terms borrowed from the practices of the Old Economy; and that the prophets frequently employ similar phraseology, when predicting the state of the Church under the New Covenant dispensation. The observation must be borne in mind, in illustrating these closing verses of this prophecy. When the time referred to shall arrive; when the restoration of Israel shall be effected; the restored Jews will not be in

the same position with their fathers in the days before the "fulness of time" and the overthrow of their temple and their city. They will be still a distinct nation. But they will be a *Christian* nation. And let not any allege that this is inconsistent with their being *Jews*. That would be a great mistake. In saying so, I do not mean merely that they will be Jews by natural descent, *though not in religion*. I mean, that they will be Jews *in religion*, as well as by descent. I mean, that *Christianity* is the only true *Judaism*. Those who were converted to the Christian faith were, in apostolic times, the only Jews that rightly understood their own system. They were brought to this understanding by the preaching of the Apostles, and the illumination of the Spirit of God. They saw that Judaism was *Christianity in type*; and that Christianity was *Judaism realized*. Faith in Jesus was just faith of the fulfilled types, and promises, and predictions of the Old Testament period. It was not passing from an old to a new religion. The transition was only from the embryo to the maturity—from the shadow to the substance—of the *same religion*. The convert from Judaism to Christianity is thus the only really consistent Jew. He only follows out to its completion the divine design in all the rites and ceremonies of the Law;—the ceremonial law having been the Gospel in its rudiments,—the Gospel in figure: and the religions thus identical. All that was external, carnal, worldly, had a *spiritual meaning*; and its design was then only truly manifested, when this spiritual import was realized in the character. Hence the Apostle's language—"He is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."* And hence the language of Christ to the church in Smyrna—"I know the blasphemy of them who say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." They were "zealous for the

* Rom. ii. 28, 29.

law," and violent opposers of Jesus, and blasphemers of his name and pretensions. But in acting thus they showed that, in calling themselves Jews, they "*lied*." They were zealous for what God had abolished, and persecutors and determined subverters of what God, by the abolished system, had intended to introduce and establish. They thus were not of His congregation, even though zealous for His law, but of "the synagogue of Satan." In denying Christ, they denied Moses; and Moses, as well as Christ, denied them; for Moses and Christ were one; Moses teaching the elements, Christ the full lesson. "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"* When the Jews, then, are restored; although they will not resume the observance of their ancient ceremonial, they will still be *Jews*, even as to their *religion*, in the truest and best sense. In being Christians, they will observe those rites which represent and celebrate the fulfilment—the realization—of what all the ancient rites only typified and pointed to, and enjoy the *substance* of what the ancient fathers saw and enjoyed in *shadow*. Let such thoughts, then, be carried along with you, while we offer our observations on the verses read.

If I have any right apprehension of their import, they may be interpreted as expressing *three things*, to be specially characteristic of "*that day*;"—the period of the restoration of Israel, and of the fulness of the Gentiles.

1. We have first—the *cessation of all the distinctions of ceremonial holiness*:—"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar."†

You will recollect, *where*, under the Law, the inscription "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD," was divinely enjoined to be

* John v. 45—17.

† Verse 20.

placed:—"Thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD."* There was nothing, in the eye of an ancient Jew, higher in his conceptions of dignity, or more sacred in his feelings of veneration, than the person, and office, and attire, and functions, of the High Priest. The inscription implied his entire consecration to God. His wearing it on his forehead was necessary to his acceptance, and to the acceptance of his services in behalf of the people. Here alone was this inscription to be seen; expressive of the special sacredness of the person and the office. What, then, could more appropriately or emphatically intimate the abolition of the distinctions of ceremonial holiness, than that this very inscription should, in the coming times, be graven "*on the bells of the horses.*" By the "horses" I understand, not at all *war* horses—for there is nothing in the passage that has any such reference—but horses employed in agricultural and other descriptions of labour. The "bells on these horses," are said to have been "small metallic plates suspended from their necks or heads, for the sake of ornament, as well as to make a tinkling noise by their striking against each other, like cymbals." The general import seems to be—that not only their most solemn acts of worship, but all their ordinary labour should be consecrated to God,—*all holy*. I will not go so far as to say, with some, that nothing, even in its associations, shall be more sacred than another; for that would be unnatural and impossible: but that a portion of the same sacred feeling which characterises their instruments and acts of worship should enter into every thing in their most ordinary occupations: the very yoking of their horses for toil being regarded as done *religiously*. So far as mere ceremonial holiness—the holiness of any

* Exod. xxviii. 37, 38.

thing external—is concerned, there will be no greater degree of holiness attaching to what was formerly accounted most sacred, than what will attach to the ornamental trappings of the horses. Devotion of person and property to the service of God will be the only holiness then recognized. “Ceremonial sanctity”—that is the sanctity of *mere things*—“shall no longer exist.”

And the same general lesson is taught by the latter clause of the verse:—“And the pots in the LORD’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar.” “*The bowls before the altar*” seem to mean the vessels for receiving the blood of the sacrifice when there slain. The sacrificial blood was sacred; nothing more so. Every thing was sacred which it touched. The bowls, therefore, in which it was caught at the altar by the priests, had associated with them a special amount of ceremonial sanctity. And there being here placed on a level, in point of such sanctity, with the ordinary seething-pots used in the temple, or in the dwellings of the priests which were part of the precincts of the temple, is emphatically significant of the truth that this kind of ceremonial sanctity was to be no more. There was to be no peculiar sacredness in the former; there was to be the only true sacredness in the other; namely, their being all used, with their contents, in the spirit of devotion,—the spirit of gratitude and of regard to the glory of God. The priests, in using the one, and in using the other, to be influenced by the same “fear of God;” in using their ordinary seething-pots and in receiving the blood into its appropriate vessels from the altar. Does not this, it may be asked, imply that “the Lord’s House,” and “the altar,” and “the bowls before the altar” were then to remain, and to be occupied and employed as of old? I answer the question by asking another: Is it intended to be predicted that at the distant future period looked forward to, there were to be “*bells on the horses’*” necks or heads, as when the prophet wrote? No one will be so foolish as to go *thus* literally to work. In like manner, the language as to the Lord’s house is to be under-

stood as the language of symbol, taken from practices existing at the time.

There is now, indeed, and there will be then, a "House of the Lord," and a priesthood, and sacrifices. What are they? What shall they then be? Let two or three simple passages of Scripture answer the question:—"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* "Ye are the temple of the living God: as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."† "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."‡ "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."§ "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well-pleased."|| We have, under the New Covenant, in the proper sense of the designation, only ONE PRIEST, and ONE SACRIFICE; namely, "the great high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,"—and the "one offering, by which he hath for ever perfected all them that are sanctified." And all our offerings must be presented in His name, and can find no acceptance but on His account. There is no association—none with any sacred building, altar, or locality, that gives holiness and acceptableness to any of our services.

* Eph. ii. 20—22. † 2 Cor. vi. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.
 § 1 Peter ii. 4, 5. || Compare 1 Pet. ii. 9; Rev. i. 5, 6;
 Psal. li. 17; Heb. xiii. 15, 16.

Men may "*everywhere* lift up holy hands," and find the same acceptance.

2. *The universal prevalence of personal and domestic consecration to God*.—"Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts." Cooking pots, and drinking cups might have been alike understood in the first clause, had it stood alone; but the second restricts the meaning to the former,—"*seething* in them" being appropriate to them only. When "*the bells* of the horses" were spoken of, there was a reference to their *labours*, as all being set about and performed in the spirit of godliness,—all thus rendered acts of religious homage, as acceptable to Jehovah as the most sacred service of the mitred high priest. In the present verse, the reference is to *food*—to their personal and social meals,—to the use which should be made of the bounties of God's providence. Every meal, partaken in the spirit of piety, being like an act of devotion: gratitude existing in the heart to the Giver; and the gifts themselves being used according to the divine precepts of sobriety and moderation; and for the sustenance of life, that the life so sustained may be spent in the service and to the glory of God.* It is the prevalence of this principle in the partaker that renders both the food, and the very vessels in which it is prepared, holy in God's sight; imparting to them the only kind of sanctity that is of any real worth, or that, in the nature of things, can possibly belong to them; and that makes the domestic table, when those who surround it "eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God," as pleasing a sight for His eye to look upon, as any express act of devotion—of social praise or prayer.

The association of everything with religion will to some minds be a very gloomy and repulsive one. But to the religious themselves—if their religion is of the right sort—it presents the idea of anything but gloom. The "gladness" with which the first Christians "did eat their meat" was something far superior to the world's mirth. The world

* Compare 1 Cor. x. 31.

might not relish it; but it was not, on that account, the less truly gladness; gladness such as they never had experienced before. Thus it is with Christians, and with Christian families still. Their meals are "holiness unto the Lord." They forget not that it is of *His* bounties they partake. They eat and drink to His praise:—

"Still will we make thy mercies known,
Around *thy* board, and round *our own*."

There are some who seem as if they lived to eat. The true saint eats to live; and lives to God. The whole of his domestic establishment is marked by the Spirit of godliness; all "holy and acceptable to God."

What is added may be differently interpreted:—"And all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts." The word rendered here "*sacrifice*" is by Dr. Henderson translated "*slaughter*," and is understood by him not as meaning the slaying of sacrificial victims, but of animals for ordinary food:—"From its being expressly mentioned," says he, "that the flesh of the animals to be slaughtered is to be boiled in the pots, and no mention is made of the sprinkling of the blood, it must be inferred that killing for food, and not for sacrifice, is what the prophet had in view." The question, however, naturally suggests itself, How does slaughtering for food, and using "the pots" in the houses of Jerusalem and Judah, in its preparation, indicate either the godliness of the partakers, or the equal sanctity of common and sacred utensils? May not, then, the idea be this? There were certain preparations of the flesh of the sacrifices for food, which required to be done in the temple, and in the consecrated vessels of the holy place. "And thou shalt take the ram of the consecration, and seethe his flesh in the holy place. And Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram, and the bread that is in the basket, by the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And they shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a

stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy.* “The priest that offereth it for sin shall eat it; in the holy place shall it be eaten, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation. All the males among the priests shall eat thereof: it is most holy.”† The flesh to be thus eaten in the holy place required of course to be prepared in holy vessels—vessels not rendered unclean by common use. Understand, then, by “All they that sacrifice,” the *priests*,—and we have a meaning most appropriate. They shall take of the pots in common use as freely to “seethe therein” what pertained to the sacrifice, as of the sacred vessels of the sanctuary. Thus we have the two lessons combined—the abrogation of all the restrictive laws of ceremonial holiness; and the holiness of what was employed in common use, when thus used in the spirit of godliness.‡

Alas! what an amount of ceremonial sanctity continues—not in the spirit and practice of unconverted Jews merely—no, nor chiefly; but in the so-called Christian Church! The entire system of the ritual of the Romish Church is constructed on the very principle of external and ceremonial sanctity; with its altars, its crucifixes, its images and pictures, its candles, its masses, its crossings, and bowings, and genuflexions, its holy waters and sprinklings, its beads, pater-nosters, Ave-marias, its relics, its holy places, stations, pilgrimages, and penances, its extreme unctions, with oil and chrism, and even its purgatory. And what is our modern English Puseyism but a mock imitation of Antichrist,—a *would-be* Romanism. The existence of such things is sufficient proof that the time in our text is not yet come. And while we say this of such extreme cases, let us not forget the tendency there is in all Christian denominations to attach sacredness to externalities, and trust in a ceremonial sanctity. There may be a disavowal of baptismal regeneration, while yet there is a superstitious notion of a certain virtue in the ordinance which makes parents

* Exod. xxix. 31—33.

† Lev. vi. 26, 29; Compare also Lev. x. 16—18.

‡ Hengstenberg renders *sacrifice*. So also Dathe, Schulz, and others.—Ed

dread a child's dying without it, although they have no right conception or impression of the parental obligations connected with it. And there may be a thorough disbelief of transubstantiation and the sacrifice of the Mass; while yet, by persons who are destitute of heart-holiness, of anything like inward spiritual religion, there is no little reliance placed on the regular "*taking of the sacrament*." O let us cherish the remembrance that external observances are worthless, except as means of confirming and promoting inward purity, and devotedness of heart and life to God! Think of the features of character on which our divine Lord pronounces his blessing, as being those which must attend faith in Him, and be the evidences of its sincerity:—"Blessed are the poor in spirit:" "blessed are they that mourn:" "blessed are the meek:" "blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness:" "blessed are the merciful:" "blessed are the pure in heart:" "blessed are the peace-makers:" "blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." No externalism—no ceremonial sanctity, here! But we must notice—

3. *Purity of ministry and membership in the Church of God*:—"And there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord."

"By *Canaanite*," says Dr. Henderson, "is meant a *merchant*.* The Phœnicians, who inhabited the northern part of Canaan, having been the most celebrated merchants of antiquity." And he gives instances of the occurrence of the same word in a similar sense; and applies the prophet's words exclusively to the *priesthood*, or the ministry:—"Considering what stumbling-blocks a mercenary and covetous priesthood has ever proved to the world, and to what a fearful extent the ministry in holy things has been made a matter of merchandise, there is great force in the declaration with which the prophet closes: 'and there shall no more be a *Canaanite* in the house of Jehovah!'" This is truth; awful,

* "By far the larger majority follow the Septuagint and render it Canaanite; and in the main this rendering is greatly to be preferred." *Hengstenberg*.—Ed.

affecting truth. Many times do the prophets bewail it.* And the same evil is foretold in the New Testament as speedily to discover itself in the Christian Church:—"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."† And how very soon did such characters appear, who, in Paul's forcible terms, considered "gain as godliness;" and how fearfully has the Church been infested with them all along!—men who have sought to be "put into the priest's office, that they might get a piece of bread;" and not a few, without one atom of personal godliness, or of the true spirit of the office, have revelled in its ampler emoluments, and left their flocks to spiritual starvation! All this will in the blessed future be done away. There will be no hireling shepherds; no merchandise of souls. Such buyers and sellers shall be finally and for ever driven out of the temple; and God's house be no more a house of merchandise; and especially of *such* merchandise,—traffic in sin and in the souls of men!

But, while this is truth, we question if it be *all* the truth intended. The Jews, when they entered Canaan, were to keep themselves distinct from the inhabitants of the land; not to mix with them, by marriage or otherwise. They were neither to join in *their* idolatrous rites; nor were they to admit the idolatrous to join in the worship of Jehovah, except on the condition of their renouncing their idol-worship, and embracing and abiding by the worship of Jehovah. Such amalgamation would have been dishonour to the one God, and a profanation of His worship. In the Christian Church

* Compare Jer. v. 30, 31; Ezek. xxxiv. 2, 3; Micah iii. 11.

† 2 Pet. ii. 1—3.

—such nominally—there has been a sad amount of this dishonouring and profaning intermixture. “The Canaanite” has been in God’s house. The world has found its way into the Church. The admonition of the apostle has been miserably disregarded—“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”* “The temple of God is holy; which temple ye are.” The evil exists to a certain extent, in all denominations; but inevitably, and from the very nature of the thing, in those which have united themselves with the governments and kingdoms of this world. In some of these the Church and the nation signify, as to their members, the same thing. Every member of the civil community is an acknowledged member of the Church:—and in our own southern Episcopacy, (I say it with sorrow) the monarch is regarded, be his character ever so irreligious and profligate, as, in virtue of his office, the first member of the Church! If this be not “the Canaanite in the house of Jehovah,” I am at a loss to know what is. The period, and state of things foretold in our text must imply the dissolution of all such connexions. In those happy days, monarchs and men of high degree will indeed have their place in the house of God; but not in their official capacity, or for aught connected with their station in civil society; but solely on the ground of their personal faith and piety. The world will be the Church, only when the world is wholly converted to God, and “all

* 2 Cor. vi. 14—18.

shall know Him, from the least to the greatest ;"—when "the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in," and when "all Israel shall be saved." Observe, in conclusion,

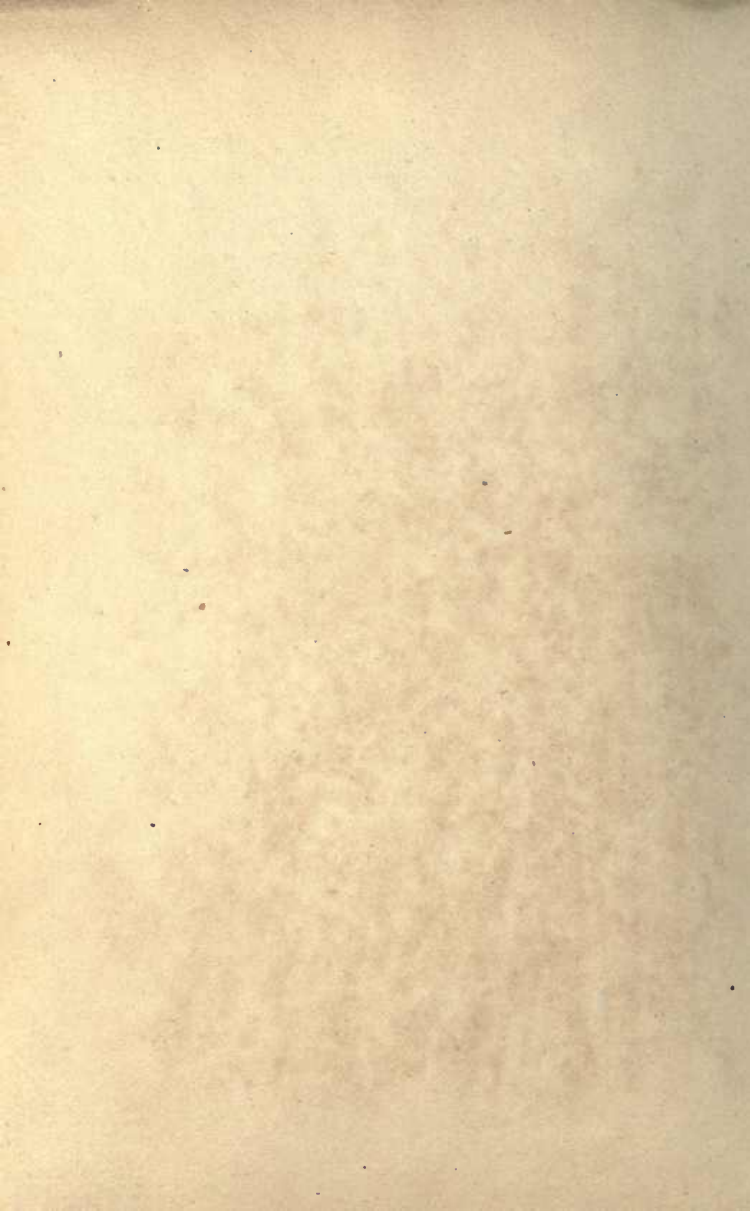
1. The necessity of our seeking *true* holiness—holiness of heart. God "looketh on the heart." He is a Spirit; and requires all who worship Him, to "worship him in spirit and in truth." No other holiness, and no other worship, can please Him. He can have no complacency in mere sacramental sanctity;—in the man who is "born of water," but not "of the Spirit;" or who partakes of bread and wine, while he does not, by "faith receiving the atonement," eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man," and so possess true spiritual life. His injunction is—"BE YE HOLY; FOR I AM HOLY." Our holiness—though derived, dependent, limited, must, in kind, be the same with His—moral holiness,—holiness of nature. And holiness of life must be the product and manifestation of holy principles and holy affections within. "A good man," in His estimate, is the man who "out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth that which is good;" who, from a purified fountain sends forth pure streams.

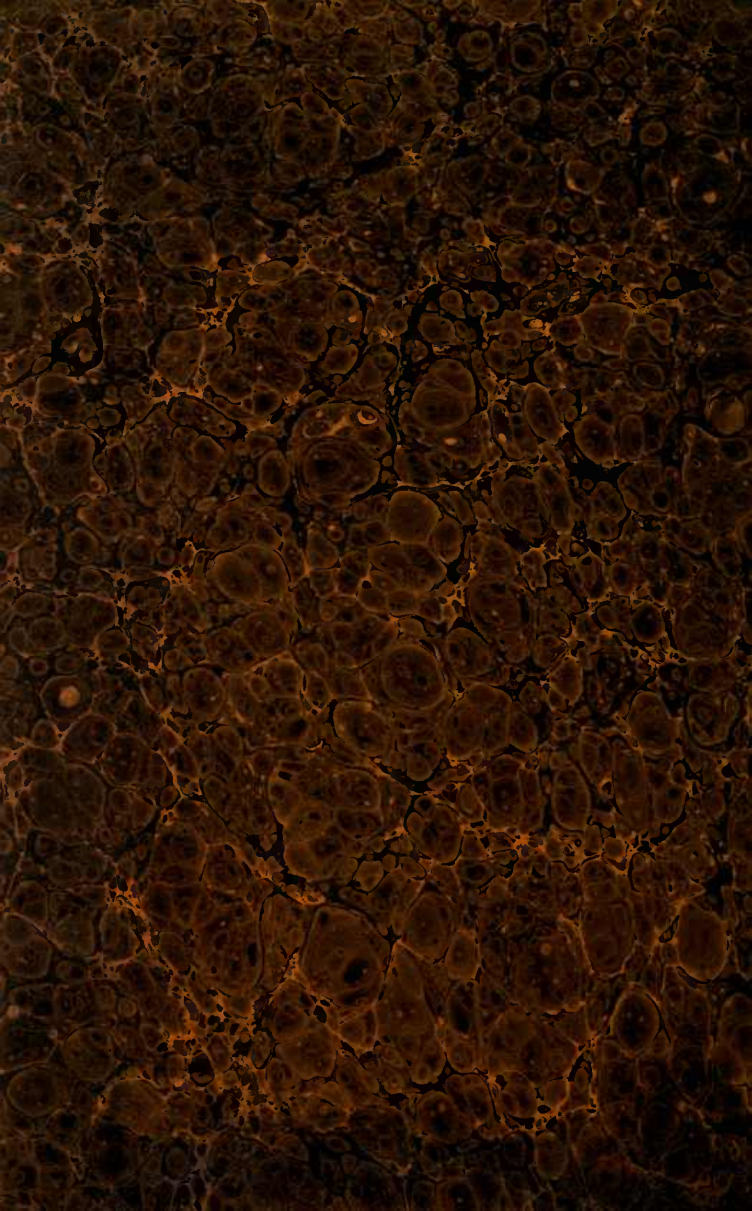
2. Let us study, practically, the duty of *carrying our religion into everything*. All our daily occupations should be imbued with it, and characterised by it. It should rise, and go forth with us in the morning. It should be our constant and influential attendant in our day's engagements. It should blend itself with them all. Religion consists not in formal acts of worship,—the prostration of the body, the utterance of the lips. It is a principle of action;—a state of soul, not apparent in bursts of emotion and seasons of lively excitement merely; but infusing itself into, and so characterising, everything; all our domestic and social intercourse; all our transactions in business; all we say, and all we do. It is thus we are to fulfil our Lord's injunction—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." It is thus alone we *can* fulfil it. There is nothing more injurious to the world, than a TALKING religion, which is

not an ACTING religion,—a religion of form, that is not a religion of practice. The more punctiliously strict, in such a case, the form, the more revolting the incongruity, and the more extensive the mischief. The more scrupulous the “tithing of the mint and anise and cumin,”—the broader “the phylacteries,” the austerer the “fasts,” and the longer the “prayers,” while the “weightier matters of the law” are neglected or violated, the greater dishonour to God, and the greater danger to souls. Far better *no* profession, than a profession like this. The influence of an avowed infidel is not half so pernicious as that of an inconsistent professor.

3. *Let all the Churches of Christ aim more and more at scriptural purity of communion.* The pastors and deacons should study the features of character required in them respectively:—and, while the study cannot but humble them, by producing an abasing consciousness of deficiency, they should seek, with the aid of the Spirit of God, growing conformity to the portraiture; that they may be ensamples to the flock. And to the churches none ought to be added, but such as have been “ADDED TO THE LORD.” They may not approach to millennial, far less to heavenly purity. But assuredly such conformity should be their great aim; and the nearer they can come to it the better.—Let us delight in anticipating the fellowship of heaven; where all shall be the divine perfection of purity, and love, and joy. The sacred pleasure is begun on earth. We feel how sweet is “the fellowship of kindred minds!” It is “*like* to that above.” While we feel this, we sing with prospective delight—

“ But if such joy be found to flow
From sacred fellowship below,—
Then what must Heaven be?—
Where all the Saviour’s friends shall meet,
And dwell in happiness complete
Throughout eternity!”





UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



A 000 106 231 4

